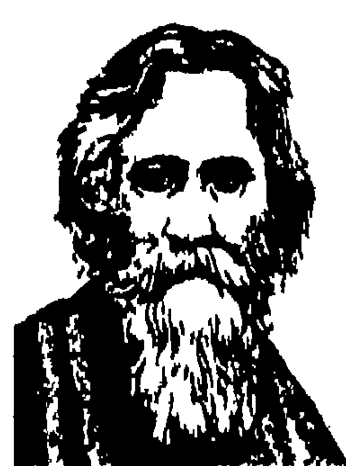




POLITICAL




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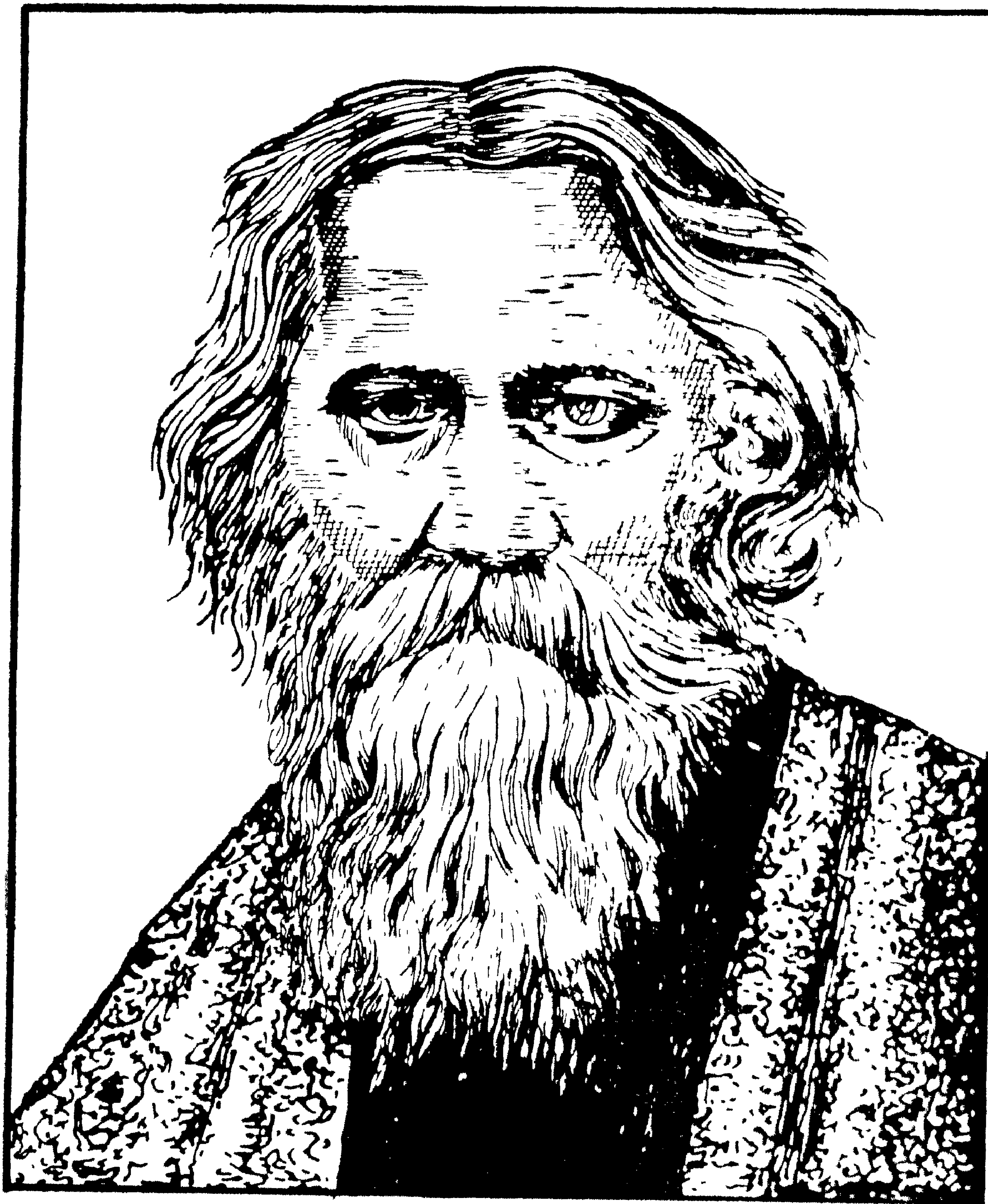
MODERN INDIA

25 RABINDRANATH TAGORE





EDITED BY
VERINDER GROVER



Rabindranath Tagore

POLITICAL THINKERS OF MODERN INDIA

VOLUME TWENTY-TWO

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

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PART II

"JANA GANA MANA"*

(Indian National Anthem)

The first stanza of the song, in the original Bengali, runs as follows :

Jana gana mana adhinayaka jaya he,
Bharata bhagya vidhata.
Panjaba Sindhu Gujerata Maratha,
Dravida Utkala Banga
Vindhya Himachala Yamuna Ganga
uchhala jaladhitaranga
Tava shubha name jage, tava shubha ashisa mage,
gahe tava jaya gatha.
Jana gana mangala dayaka jaya he,
Bharata bhagya vidhata
Jaya he jaya he jaya he, jaya, jaya, jaya, jaya he.

The English translation of the song by the poet himself is given below :

THE MORNING SONG OF INDIA

Thou art the ruler of the minds of all people, dispenser of India's destiny.

Thy name rouses the hearts of the Punjab, Sindh, Gujarat and Maratha, of the Dravid and Orissa and Bengal;

*The song "Jana gana mana" was written by Rabindranath Tagore in Bengali in 1912. Set to music by the poet himself, it is an invocation to 'the Dispenser of India's destiny' praying for His blessings. It had been associated with the struggle for Indian freedom and was sung in the Constituent Assembly at its historic midnight session on the 14th August 1947. On the 24th January, 1950, it was adopted by the Constituent Assembly as India's National Anthem.

It echoes in the hills of the Vindhyas and Himalayas, mingles in the music of the Jamna and Ganges, and is chanted by the waves of the Indian sea.

They pray for Thy blessing, and sing Thy praise. The saving of all people waits in Thy hand, Thou dispenser of India's destiny.

Victory, victory, victory to Thee !

Day and night Thy voice goes from land to land calling the Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains round Thy throne, and the Parsis, Musalmans and Christians.

The East and the West join hands in their prayer to Thee, and the garland of love is woven.

Thou bringest the hearts of all people into the harmony of one life, Thou dispenser of India's destiny.

Victory, victory, victory to Thee !

The procession of pilgrims passes over the endless road rugged with the rise and fall of nations;

And it resounds with the thunder of Thy wheels, Eternal Charioteer !

Through the dire days of doom Thy trumpet sounds, and men are led by Thee across death.

Thy finger points the path to all people, O dispenser of India's destiny !

Victory, victory, victory to Thee !

The darkness was dense and deep was the night. My country lay in a deathlike silence of swoon.

But Thy mother-arms were round her, and Thine eyes gazed upon her troubled face in sleepless love through her hours of ghastly dreams.

Thou art the companion and the saviour of the people in their sorrows, Thou dispenser of India's destiny !

Victory, victory, victory to thee !

The night fades; the light breaks over the peaks of the eastern hills; the birds begin to sing and the morning breeze carries the breath of new life.

The rays of Thy mercy have touched the waking land with their blessings.

Victory to Thee, Kings of kings; Victory to Thee, dispenser of India's destiny !

Victory, victory, victory to Thee !

—*Rabindranath Tagore*

ON THE SHORES OF BHARAT

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

A Flight of Swans
translated by Aurobindo Bose

On the shores of Bharat,
Where men of all races have come together,
Awake, O my Mind !
Standing here with outstretched arms,
I send my salutations to the God of Humanity.
And in solemn chant sing His praises.
At whose call no one knows,
Came floating streams of men
And merged into the sea of Bharat
The Aryan, the non-Aryan, the Dravidian,
The Huns, the Pathans and the Moghuls—
They all have merged here into one body.
Today the West has opened its doors,
And from thence come gifts.
Giving and taking,
All will be welcome on the shores of Bharat,
Where men of all races have come together.
Come, O Aryan and non-Aryan,
Hindu and Muslim,
Come, O English and you Christian,
Come, O Brahmin,
Purify your mind and clasp the hands of all;
Come, O downtrodden,
And let vanish all burdens of your humiliation.
Tarry not, but come you all
To anoint the Mother,
On the shores of Bharat,
Where men of all races have come together.

PREFACE

Rabindranath Tagore was born on 7 May, 1861 in the Jorasonko house at 6 Dwarkanath Tagore Lane, Calcutta. He was the 14th child of Devendranath Tagore and Sarada Devi.

The Tagores belonged to the Pirali class of Brahmins. Originally hailing from Jessore, the family settled in Calcutta about the time the East India Company had founded the city.

Rabindranath in his *Reminiscences* has sketched the story of his early days. His austere father, more and more withdrawn from the world, yet aware of everything that happened around, in his vast household, was at first a pervading presence, seldom seen or spoken to. Rabindranath lost his mother in childhood, and his upbringing was done by the servants. His main source of joy then was when some maids and servants stirred in him the love of tales and fables, rhymes and songs. As a result he started writing verses soon after he learnt the alphabet and he imbibed the love of music from the atmosphere at home.

Rabindranath's school career was brief and uneventful. All his life, he shunned the orthodox paths. He was a boy who was unfit for the rough and tumble of the life. The unruly conduct of his class-mates and the retribution of the rod disgusted him. His real education came not from any tutor or school, but from the whole circumstances and environment of his life.

Rabindranath's first poem appeared in *Tattvabodhini Patrika* in 1874 when he was just 12 years old. After that there was no looking back and he wrote high quality dramas, verse and prose for over 60 years. This made him one of the most versatile writers of the age.

Rabindranath was not only a poet, a dramatist and a writer but also a social and political worker. In the social sphere he was a rigid opponent of the Caste system. In the political field, it was

his conviction that there should be no discrimination based on religion, language, caste or sex. He was a democrat in his social, political and economic outlook.

Rabindranath firmly believed that political subjugation of India was the result of an intrinsic weakness of her people. The roots of India's bondage lay in her neglect of individual and acceptance of a social system which had condemned millions of her children to indignities and humiliation. He, therefore, recommended that Indians must become self-reliant and develop knowledge, moral purpose and aesthetic perception. After this, freedom for India would not be far away, he believed. Tagore was not a professional politician, yet he could not bear the sufferings of his people and condemned the British rulers for committing atrocities on them. In 1906 he became the spokesman of the *Swadeshi* movement.

This book is a systematic piecing together of articles contributed by scholars and specialists to the various journals of national and international repute. My special thanks are due to the *Modern Review*, *Young India*, *Psychology*, *Viswa Bharati Quarterly*, *Personality*, *Sadhna*, *South Asia*, *Nationalism*, *Swarajya*, *Indo-Asian Culture*, *Link*, *Radical Humanist*, *Indian Journal of Political Science*, *Gandhi Marg* and *The Times of India*, from which I have drawn freely. I express my deep sense of appreciation to all contributors for their scholarly papers and gratitude to the various librarians and eminent scholars in the field who extended their cooperation to me.

New Delhi VERINDER GROVER

CHRONOLOGY

1861 : Rabindranath Tagore born in Calcutta at the Jorasanko house of the Tagores at 6 Dwarkanath Tagore Lane (at present known as Maharshi Bhavan) on Tuesday, 7 May, between 2.30 and 3.00 hours (corresponding to Monday, Vaisakh 25, 1268 B.S. and Saka Era 1783,), the fourteenth child (eighth son) of Devendranath Tagore (44) and Sarada Devi (37).

1866 (Age 5) : Rabindranath starts learning the alphabet along with Somendranath (b. 1859), his immediate elder brother, and Satyaprasad Ganguli (b. 1859), his nephew.

1868 (Age 7) : Rabindranath admitted to Oriental Seminary and later to Normal School.

1869 (Age 8) : Rabindranath makes his first attempt at versification. Translation of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* appears in successive numbers of the Bengali journal, *Abodh Bandhu*. It profoundly impresses the romantic boy.

1870 (Age 9) : School-teaching is re-inforced at home under private tutors. The subjects taught through the medium of Bengali include rudiments of general science, elementary geometry, arithmetic, history, geography, physiology and anatomy, besides Sanskrit grammar, Bengali and English ; also drawing and music. Practises wrestling and gymnastics.

1871 (Age 10) : Rabindranath is admitted to the Bengal Academy, an Anglo-Indian School, using English as medium of instruction. Begins to play truant.

1872 (Age 11) : Rabindranath is removed to a garden-house at

Panihati on the Hooghly along with the members of the family on account of an epidemic of *dengu* in Calcutta. His first acquaintance with the countryside of Bengal.

1873 (Age 12) : Rabindranath's Upanayan (Brahminical initiation into *Gayatri* prayers) is performed in Calcutta on 6 February. Visits Santiniketan for the first time, and, while there, composes a drama, *Prithviraj Parajaya* (The Defeat of Prithviraj), the MS. of which is lost.

1874 (Age 13) : While studying at home under his private tutor, Jnanchandra Bhattacharya, he prepares a verse-rendering of *Macbeth* (a portion of it was later published in the Bengali magazine *Bharati* of 1880-81). His poem entitled *Abhilash* (Desire), said to have been composed the previous year, appears anonymously in the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*. He is admitted to the St. Xavier's School in Calcutta.

1875 (Age 14) : On 11th February recites (his first public appearance) a patriotic poem at the Hindu Mela. This was later published—being the first poem published over his name—in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (then an Anglo-Bengali weekly) of 25 February, Death of his mother on March. (He was then 13 years 10 months of age.)

1876 (Age 15) : Becomes a junior member of a short-lived secret society established by Rajnarain Bose and Jyotirindranath under the name Sanjibani Sabha, supposed to have been modelled after Mazzini's carbonari.

1877 (Age 16) : Composes and recites at the Hindu Mela a poem satirizing the Delhi Darbar held by Lord Lytton on 1st January to proclaim Queen Victoria the Empress of India. The poem was a severe indictment of the Princely Order of India who hugged 'the golden chain' while the whole country was ravaged by the great Indian famine.

Kavya; his first long story with the title *Bhikharini* (Beggar Maid); first novel (unfinished) of the name of *Karuna* and a long poem entitled *Kabikahini*,

1878 (Age 17) : Rabindranath is sent to Ahmedabad (Bombay Presidency) to stay and study English with his second brother Satyendranath, now posted there as District Judge. Sets, for the first time, some of his lyrics to music.

First Foreign Tour (20 September 1878—February 1880)
Sails with Satyendranath for England by *S.S. Poona* on 20 September. Arrives in London and goes to school at Brighton where he stays with Jnanadanandini Devi (Mrs. Satyendranath Tagore) and her children, Surendranath and Indira.

1879 (Age 18) : Rabindranath is brought to London by Satyendranath's friend Taraknath (later Sir Taraknath) Palit and admitted to the University College, where he studies along with Lokendranath Palit, English literature under Professor Henry Morley, brother of Lord Morley.

1880 (Age 19) : Returns to India in February without completing any course of study.
Takes part in a private performance of Jyotirindranath's lyrical drama, *Manmoyi*, immediately after his arrival in Calcutta.

1881 (Age 20) : Composes his first set of devotional songs for the anniversary of Brahmo Samaj (11 Magh). His first musical play, *Valmiki-Pratibha*, is staged at the Jorasanko house before a distinguished gathering, the Poet himself appearing in the title role. Two of his books, *Rudrachanda* (a drama in verse dedicated to Jyotindranath) and *Bhagnahriday* (a long poem in dramatic form dedicated to Kadambari Devi by her pseudonym), are published. His first polemical writing, condemning the opium-trade by England in China, entitled *Chine Maraner Byabasa* (Death Traffic in China), appears in the *Bharati*, on the basis of facts gathered from the English rendering of a German book. Gives his first public lecture on 'Music and Feeling' with vocal demonstration at the lecture theatre of the Calcutta Medical College.

1882 (Age 21) : Joins hands with Jyotirindranath in establishing *Sarasvat Samaj*, an organization which may be called the precursor of the Academy of Bengali Letters (Bangiya Sahitya

Parishat), which came into being more than a decade after.

1883 (Age 22) : Marries Mrinalini Devi (b. 1873), daughter of Benimadhav Raichaudhuri of Jessore, on 9 December. Inauguration of the Indian National Conference at the Albert Hall in Calcutta. This conference may be said to be the forerunner of the Indian National Congress.

1884 (Age 23) : Composes the poems of *Khadi o Komal* (Sharps and Flats), translations from Shelley, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Victor Hugo and others, and also his first prose-drama, *Nalini*, originally planned as a co-operative work with the other members of the family. His first great sorrow in life comes in the death (19 April) of his sister-in-law, Jyotirindranath's wife, Kadambari Devi, to whom he was deeply attached. He dedicates three of his books to her memory including an anthology called *Saisab Sangit* (Songs of Childhood), containing selected poems written in his early years (13 to 16). Is appointed Secretary of the Adi Brahmo Samaj. Enters into controversy with Bankimchandra Chatterji over the neo-Hindu movement.

1885 (Age 24) : Is placed (April) in charge of *Balak*, a new Bengali monthly for the young, edited by Jnanadanandini Devi (Satyendranath's wife), and later incorporated with *Bharati*. Contributes to it within the course of the year several poems, a number of essays and articles, letters and humorous sketches (charades), one long story *Mukut* (The Crown), and a serial novel, *Rajarsni* (The Saintly King). His first essay on Rammohun Roy is brought out as a brochure. Edits an anthology of Vaishnava lyrics in collaboration with his friend Srish Chandra Majumdar. *Rabichchhaya*, the first collection of his songs, is published by a friend. The first collection of his serious essays comes out as *Alochana*.

1886 (Age 25) : Engages in controversies over social and socio-religious subjects.
Composes and sings the inaugural song, 'Amra Milechhi aj mayer dakey' (Gathered are we this day at the Mother's Call) at the second session of the Indian National Congress in

Calcutta. His first child, a daughter (Madhurilata or Bela), is born on 25 October.
Receives his first literary prize in the form of a handsome cheque from his father on account of the devotional songs composed for the anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj.

1887 (Age 26) : Starts composing the *Manasi* group of poems marked by a distinct note of originality and vigour both in theme and technique. Publishes under the name *Chithipatra* a series of imaginary letters between an old-fashioned grandfather and his modernified grandson. Reads a paper on Hindu marriage criticizing the system of early marriage.

1888 (Age 27) : The first collection of his essays in literary criticism on various subjects appears under the title *Samalochana.*

1889 (Age 28) : Proceeds with his family to Sholapur where he stays with Satyendranath. Here he writes his first five-act drama. *Raja o Rani* (The King and the Queen), in blank verse.

1890 (Age 29) : *Visarjan* is staged at the family residence, the Poet appearing as Raghupati. At a public meeting in Calcutta reads a paper protesting against the reactionary anti-Indian policy of Lord Cross, the then Secretary of State for India, and advocates appointment of elected representatives of the people as members of the Viceroy's Executive Council. Spends the summer months at Santiniketan.

Second Foreign Tour (22 August—4 November)
Sails for England by *S.S. Siam* with Satyendranath and Loken Palit on 22 August. Visits Italy and France on the way, and climbs the newly erected Eiffel Tower in Paris. Returns home on 4 November and goes to live at Shelidah where he comes into close contact with the people and their affairs. Attends the sixth session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta.

1891 (Age 30) : His second daughter Renuka is born on 23 January. Writes his first crop of six short stories (notably *Post Master*) published in the Bengali weekly *Hitabadi.*

1892 (Age 31) : At the request of the Rajshahi Association writes

his first criticism of the system of education introduced by the English in an essay entitled *Sikshar Herpher* (Tortuosities of Education), a vigorous and reasoned plea for the acceptance of the mother-tongue as the medium of instruction. His views are endorsed by Bankimchandra Chatterji and Gurudas Banerji (the then Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University). Starts writing the poems of *Sonar Tari* (The Golden Barge) which punctuates a land-mark in his poetry. Practices the art of drawing off and on. Writes his first humorous play in prose, *Goday Galad* (Wrong at the Start).

1893 (Age 32) : Commences writing *Panchabhuter Diary* (Diary of the Five Elements), a series of brilliant dialogues on life, literature and art. Reads a paper in October on *Ingraj o Bharatvasi* (Englishmen and Indians) at a public meeting with Bankimchandra Chatterji in the Chair. This is followed by a paper on *Ingrajer Atanka* (The Englishman's Fear) warning the Congress against neglecting the potential value of Hindu-Muslim unity. Writes his dramatic poem *Viday Abhisap* (*Curse at Farewell*).

1894 (Age 33) : His third and youngest daughter, Mira, is born on 12 January. Composes the poem *Ebar Phirao Morey* (Turn me away, now) which is a call to his own self to turn away from a life of ease to a strenous life of struggle dedicated to the service of humanity. The provocation for writing this poem came from the British high-handedness in Africa (Zulu War).

1895 (Age 34) : To promote business enterprise among the youth in Bengal and the use of goods of indigenous manufacture (Swadeshi) enters into partnership with his nephews, Surendranath and Balendranath, who set up a store for Swadeshi goods in Calcutta and a jute-pressing factory and a few subsidiary concerns at Kushtia.

1896 (Age 35) : His long poem, *Nadi* (The River), is dedicated to Balendranath on the day of his wedding. The poem *Jivandevata* (The Muse of Life), which introduces a mystic note and becomes the subject of much controversy, is written about

this time. Writes, in collaboration with Hemchandra Bhattacharya, *Sanskrita Siksha* (Sanskrit Primer) in two parts. This book indicates his growing interest in the education of children.

1897 (Age 36) : Writes his comedy, *Baikunther Khata* (The Manuscript of Baikuntha), and appears in the role of Kedar in a stage-presentation of it. Attends the Bengal Provincial Conference at Natore (June 11) under the Presidentship of Satyendranath.

1898 (Age 37) : In April takes over editorial charge of *Bharati* and contributes to it in the course of the year a large number of poems, essays on social, political, literary, philosophical and educational subjects, and short stories.
Attends the Dacca session (31 May-2 June) of the Bengal Provincial Conference and reads a summary in Bengali of the presidential address by Rev. Kalicharan Banerjee delivered in English. Severely criticizes the servile mentality and political reactionalism of some members of the landed aristocracy. Also sings a national song before the proceedings commenced.

1899 (Age 38) : On the outbreak of plague in Calcutta warns the authorities against a repetition of the Bombay measures which ended in two murders. Helps Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble, Vivekananda's Irish disciple) in organizing relief for plague-victims in Calcutta.

1900 (Age 39) : Publishes *Katha* (Lays and Ballads) chronicling the deeds of heroism and martyrdom in Rajput, Maratha and Sikh history—all seeking to inspire in the young a spirit of deep patriotism and a pride in the nation's storied past, and *Kahini* (story-poems) based mostly on mythological themes.

1901 (Age 40) : Visits Allahabad accompanied by his nephew Surendranath. Revives Bankimchandra Chatterji's monthly journal *Bangadarsan* and edits it for five years. Contributes to it serially his first psychological novel, *Chokher Bali* (Eng. tr. *Binodini*). Composes the poems of *Naivedya* (Offerings), an inspiring exposition in verse of the spiritual values of the Indian way of life,

1902 (Age 41) : In the course of an appreciative review of Lowes Dickinson's *Letters of John Chinaman* writes about the unity of life and thought of Asia. Joins in the countrywide agitation against Lord Curzon's insinuation of the Eastern characteristic of 'exaggeration or extravagance', and writes a trenchant retort in *Bangadarsan* quoting instances of England's lying propaganda against the Boers in South Africa.

1903 (Age 42) : The sudden illness of his second daughter, Renuka, necessitates her removal first to Hazaribagh and then to Almora for a change of climate. Renuka is brought to Calcutta where she dies in September, nine months after her mother's death.

1904 (Age 43) : Tagore's growing interest in the political problems of the country finds expression in a series of essays culminating with *Swadeshi Samaj* (Indigenous Society) in which he stresses the need of rural reconstruction based on mutual aid. Following this essay, prepares a complete scheme for reorganization of village life advocating a kind of societal state within a political state.

1905 (Age 44) : Death occurs of his father Debendranath at the age of 88 (16 March 1311 B.E. or 19 January 1905) at the Jorasanko house in Calcutta. Translates into Bengali verse the first four chapters of the Buddhist scripture *Dhammapada* from the original Pali.

1906 (Age 45) : Sends his eldest son Rathindranath and Santosh (son of his friend Srischandra Majumdar), two of the first group of students of Santiniketan, (via Japan) to the University of Illinois at Urbana to study Agriculture. Pays tribute to the brave victims of police repression in different parts of the new province of East Bengal. Is invited to preside over the first session of Bangiya Sahitya Sammilani (Bengali Literary Conference) which was to be held simultaneously with the session of the Bengal Provincial Conference at Barisal. Returns to Calcutta when the function had to be abandoned as a protest against magisterial interference in the holding of the Provincial Conference.

1907 (Age 46) : Feels perturbed at the growing alienation between

Hindus and Muslims. The agitational excesses of the Swadeshi movement and a sense of their utter futility in the larger context of the lasting good of the country, bring disillusionment and lead him to withdraw from active politics. From his retreat at Santiniketan (where he devotes much more attention to his educational work) he writes an article, *Byadhi o Pratikar* (The Disease and its Cure), advocating a change of heart and acceptance of a radical social programme for the attainment of real and abiding freedom.

1908 (Age 47) : Presides over the annual Bengal Provincial Conference at its Pabna session on 11 February when the political atmosphere was still surcharged with the excitement following the unhappy split at Surat. Delivers his presidential address in Bengali thus departing for the first time from the prevailing vogue of English, reiterating his call to young men of Bengal to dedicate themselves to constructive work in villages and to the work of bringing Hindus and Muslims together in corporate work, for the well-being of the Bengali community as a whole.

1909 (Age 48) : On the occasion of the anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj delivers a sermon entitled *Navajuger Utsav* (Festival of the New Age) in which he upholds the ideal of universal religion and a synthesis of cultures.

1910 (Age 49) : At the anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj delivers in Calcutta a sermon on *Visvabodh* (Eng. tr. *Realisation of the Infinite* in *Sadhana*).

1911 (Age 50) : Meets the English portraitist, William Rothenstein, and the German philosopher, Count Hermann Keyserling, at Abanindranath's residence in Jorasanko. At the anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj delivers a sermon in Calcutta entitled *Karmayog* (Eng. tr. *Realisation in Action in Sadhana*).

1912 (Age 51) : On 12 January the Poet is felicitated on his jubilee by Bengal's intelligentsia and the public at a reception held in the Town Hall of Calcutta. This was described by *The Modern Review* as 'an unparalleled ovation—the first time that such an honour has been done to a literary man in India'.

Reads at the prayer hall of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj a paper entitled *Atmaparichay* (Introducing Myself) in which he refers to the element of universalism in the Hindu view of life and deprecates the separatist tendencies of a certain section of 'reformed' Hindus.

Third Foreign Tour (27 May 1912—4 October 1913)
Sails from Bombay on 27 May accompanied by Rathindranath and Pratima Devi. On board the ship translates some more of his poems into English. Arrives in London on 16 June.

1913 (Age 52) : Leaves Urbana (Illinois) for Chicago where he stays as the guest of Mrs. William Vaughan Moody. Lectures on the *Ideals of Ancient Civilization of India* at the University of Chicago and on *The Problem of Evil* at the Unitarian Hall of Chicago. Goes to Rochester where he attends the Congress of Religious Liberals and speaks on *Race Conflict* (30 January).

1914 (Age 53) : Early part of the year finds him in Calcutta. At a special reception at Government House, the Governor, Lord Carmichael, formally hands over the Nobel Prize Diploma and Medal to the Poet on behalf of the Swedish Academy.
Tagore's English works are now being translated into all the principal languages of Europe. Included among his translators are Andre Gide (French), Zenobia Jimenez (Spanish) and many others well known in their own language.

1915 (Age 54) : Spends the early part of the year in Calcutta and Shelidah. Delivers in Calcutta on 13 February a remarkable address at the inauguration of Bangiya Hitasadhan Mandali (Bengal Social Service League founded by Dr. D N. Maitra) on *Karmayajna* (The Worship by Labour) in which he sends out a call to the youth to take up social service in a spirit of sacrifice.
His collected poetical works in Bengali are published in ten volumes by the Indian Press, Allahabad.

1916 (Age 55) : Writes in *Sabujpatra* (March) an article entitled *Chhatra-Sasan* (Student Discipline) protesting vehemently

against the repression of students after the Oaten episode (in which Subhaschandra Bose was implicated) at the Presidency College in Calcutta and pointing out the danger inherent in the growing estrangement between the English and the Indians.

Fourth Foreign Tour (*May 1916—March 1917*)
Accepts invitation from the Pond Lyceum to undertake a lecture-tour of the United States of America. Sails by Japanese cargo boat *S.S. Tosha Maru* from Calcutta on 3 May accompanied by C.F. Andrews, Pearson and Mukul Dey.

1917 (Age 56) : *En route* to Japan halts for a day at Honolulu. Reaches Japan at the end of January. After about a month's stay in Japan returns to Calcutta with Mukul Dey on 17 March.

1918 (Age 57) : In reply to a letter Gandhi wrote from Motihari (Bihar), Tagore writes : 'Of course Hindi is the only possible national language for inter-provincial intercourse in India. But. . .I think we cannot enforce it for a long time to come.'

1919 (Age 58) : Supports Patel's Inter-Caste Marriage Bill in an open letter.

1920 (Age 59) : Spends the early part of the year at Santiniketan, busy with the affairs of the institution. After the commencement of the summer vacation starts on a tour of Western India (29 March—3 May) accompanied by C.F. Andrews, Kshitimohan Sen, Santoshchandra Majumdar and Pramathanath Bisi, then a young student at Santiniketan.

Fifth Foreign Tour (*11 May 1920—16 July 1921*)
Leaves Calcutta on 11 May accompanied by Rathindranath and Pratima Devi, and sails from Bombay on 15 May. On Board the ship has long talks with the Aga Khan who reads out to him from Hafiz and discusses Sufism. Translates during the voyage some of his Santiniketan sermons later published as *Thought Relics*. Lands at Plymouth on 5 June and is received by Pearson whom he meets after four years. In

London, Oxford and Cambridge, renews old acquaintances and makes new ones (including Cunningham-Graham, Nikolas Roerich, Gilbert Murray, T.E. Lawrence, Laurence Binyon and others). Is surprised and not a little pained to notice the 'studied aloofness' on the part of several English friends who seemed to resent his outspoken comments on the character of the British rule in India and the renunciation of his Knighthood.

1921 (Age 60) : Visits Helen Keller on 4 January at her home. At the invitation of Harvard University delivers lecture at the University Hall on 25 January. The audience included the Nobel Prize-winning scientist, Professor T.W. Richards, who wrote a warm letter of appreciation to the Poet.
On 23 December a day after the anniversary of Seventh Paush, Visva-Bharati is formally inaugurated. Lands, buildings and his other properties at Santiniketan (the interest-rights on the Nobel Prize had already been assigned to the School) are made over to the newly founded Society.

1922 (Age 61) : On 5 January returns to Santiniketan. Completes writing his drama, *Muktadhara* (The waterfall) on 14 January. In an open letter to the press (published in the *Bengalee* on 3 February) warns his countrymen against the spirit of violence vitiating the Non-co-operation Movement. His apprehension comes true the very next day at Chauri Chaura (U.P.) where innocent policemen are killed by the mob.

First Ceylon Tour
Delivers a series of lectures at Colombo and Galle Stays for a week at the health resort of Nuara Eliya. Returns to the mainland at Trivendrum on 9 November and comes back to Madras on 19 November with brief halts at Quilon, Ernakulam, Aleppy, Cochin, Alwaye and Tatapuram.

1923 (Age 62) : Lord Lytton, Governor of Bengal, visits Santiniketan. His musical drama, *Basanta* (Spring), is dedicated to Kazi Nazrul Islam (then in jail). *Basanta* is staged in Calcutta on 25 February.

1924 (Age 63) : Attends the Anniversary of the Rural Reconstruction Institute at Sriniketan on 6 February. Presides over the

annual conference of the Anti-Malarial Society of Bengal (24 February). At the invitation of the University of Calcutta delivers a course of three lectures on literature (later incorporated in *Sahityer Pathe*).

Sixth Foreign Tour (March—July)
At the invitation of Liang-chi-Chao, President of the Universities Lecture Association of China, sails for China on 21 March accompanied by Kshitimohan Sen, Nandlal Bose, Leonard K. Elmhirst and Kalidas Nag.
Writes an open letter to Lord Lytton, the Bengal Governor, challenging his speech at Dacca casting a slur on the womanhood of Bengal. Takes part in a tableaux performance of *Arupratan* at Alfred Theatre, Calcutta on 14 September.

Seventh Foreign Tour (September 1924—February 1925)
At the invitation of the Republic of Peru to attend the centenary celebrations of her independence, sails from Colombo on 24 September by *S.S. Haruna Maru* accompanied by Rathindranath, Pratima Devi, Girijapati Raichaudhuri and Surendranath Kar.

1925 (Age 64) : On 4 January sails from Buenos Aires by an Indian ship *S.S. Julio Cesare* arriving at Genoa on 21 January. At a public meeting in Milan, presided over by the Duke of Milan, gives a discourse on music. Has to cut short his visit owing to ill-health and proceeds to Venice on 29 January. He is taken round the historic city from where he sails for India on 2 February. Reaches India on 17 February.

1926 (Age 65) : The League of Nations Cultural Representative, F.S. Marvin, visits Santiniketan on 12 January. Hindu-Muslim riot breaks out in Calcutta. The poet denounces the militant religiosity of the people.

Eighth Foreign Tour (May—December)
Formichi sends invitation to the Poet to make an extended visit to Italy. Leaves Calcutta on 12 May accompanied by Rathindranath and Pratima Devi, Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis and Rani Devi, and others. Sails

from Bombay on 15 May by *S.S. Aquileja*. Reaches Naples on 30 May and is received by the chief officials of the city bearing a message from Mussolini welcoming him to Italy as the guest of the Italian Government. The murder of Swami Sradhananda at Delhi by a moslem fanatic shocks him, and in an address given at Santiniketan on 25 December he appeals for mutual understanding and good-will between the two major communities of India.

1927 (Age 66) : *Natir Puja* (Worship of the Dancing Girl) is staged in Calcutta on 28, 29 and 31 January, the Poet appearing in the role of Upali, a Buddhist monk. This is the first occasion when a Tagore play is presented before a Calcutta audience with dancing by girl-students of Santiniketan forming an essential part of the ensemble. On 3 February issues an open letter to the Press protesting against 'the primitive form of despotism which permitted detention without trial under Bengal Ordinances.'

Ninth Foreign Tour

On 12 July sails from Madras on a tour of some of the South-East Asian countries accompanied by Suniti Kumar Chatterji, Surendranath Kar and Dhirendra Krishna Dev Barman with Arnold Bake and Aryanayakam forming the advance party. His itinerary included Singapore (20-26 July); Malacca (27-30 July); Kuala Lampur (30 July-7 August); Ipoh (8-11 August); Taiping (12-13 August); and Penang (14-16 August).

1928 (Age 67) : On 6 January receives at Santiniketan delegates of the Indian Science Congress who come from Calcutta in a special train on a visit to Visva-Bharati. V. Lesny, Professor of Sanskrit at Prague, joins Visva-Bharati as Visiting Professor. The great English contralto, Dame Clara Butt visits Santiniketan and gives recitals on two successive days.

Second Ceylon Tour

On 28 May boards the French boat, *S.S. Chantilly* in Madras and halts on route at Pondicherry on 29 May to pay a visit to Sri Aurobindo. Reaches Colombo on 31 May and stays there as the guest of Dr. W. de Silva for

ten days, trying to recoup his health for the voyage to England. As there is no visible improvement, decides to return to the mainland.

1929 (Age 68) : On 26 January a song sequence (with dance accompaniment), entitled *Sundar* (The Beautiful), is presented at the Jorasanko house. The next day the Poet presides over the Conference of the International Religions convened on the occasion of the centennial of the Brahmo Samaj.

Tenth Foreign Tour (February—July)
At the invitation of the National Council of Education of Canada, to participate in its Triennial Conference, the Poet leaves Calcutta on 26 February and sails from Bombay on 1 March, accompanied by Apurva K. Chanda, Sudhindra Dutt and Boyd Tucker.

1930 (Age 69) : About this time the Poet takes seriously to painting to which he devotes much time.

Eleventh Foreign Tour (March 1930—January 1931)
His visit to Oxford to deliver the Hibbert Lectures there, which had to be postponed owing to ill-health in 1928, is now undertaken. On March leaves Calcutta accompanied by Rathindranath, Pratima Devi and Aryanayakam (Private Secretary).

1931 (Age 70) : On 8 January is entertained by the Editor of the *Spectator* at a luncheon at Hyde Park Hotel where he meets and has a long talk with Bernard Shaw. Reaches Calcutta on 31 January.

1932 (Age 71) : The *Rabindra-Jayanti* celebrations, which were to be extended up to 5 January, are suddenly cut short when on 4 January the news comes of the arrest of Gandhi within a week of his return to India from the Second Round Table Conference in London. He cables to the British Prime Minister (Ramsay Macdonald) protesting against 'the policy of indiscriminate repression. . . causing permanent alienation of our people from yours'. Issues a statement on 26 January (Independence Day) which, however, is prevented from being

fully published by the Censor. He gives vent to his righteous indignation in a poem entitled *Prasna* (The Question).

Twelfth Foreign Tour (April—June)
At the invitation of King Reza Shah Pehlavi, the Poet leaves for Persia by air on 11 April, accompanied by Pratima Devi. Accepts the invitation of the University of Calcutta to take the University Chair of Bengali and also to deliver the Kamala Lectures. At a special academic reception held on 6 August the University presents him with an address.

1933 (Age 72) : Receives on 9 January Agha Poure Davoud sent by the Shah of Persia as a Visiting Professor to Vishva-Bharati. Delivers series of three lectures (Kamala lectures) at Calcutta University on the subject of *Manusher Dharma* (Religion of Man). Attends the anniversary of Sriniketan on 5 Febuary, presided over by Dr. B.C. Roy, Mayor of Calcutta. Contributes to the inaugural issue of Gandhi's journal the weekly *Harijan* (11 February), his English rendering of Satyendranath Dutta's *Mehtar* (Scavenger). Presides over the inaugural meeting of the Rammohan Centenary at Senate Hall, Calcutta on 18 February, and delivers an address in English on *Rammohan Roy*.

1934 (Age 73) : Receives Sarojini Naidu at Santiniketan on 5 January. Receives Jawaharlal Nehru and his wife Kamala on 19 January (their daughter Indira was then a student of Vishva-Bharti) and holds a public reception in their honour.

Third Ceylon Tour (May—June)
Sails for Ceylon by *S. S. Inchanga* on 5 May along with a party of teachers and students of Santiniketan for a cultural tour of Ceylon.

1935 (Age 74) : On 6 January receives at Santiniketan delegates and invitees of the Indian Science Congress who come on a visit to the institution. Sir John Anderson, Governor of Bengal, visits Santiniketan on 6 Febuary. As the police suggest elaborate security measures, the Poet has all the inmates of Santiniketan removed to Sriniketan for the period of the visit, the Governor going round the deserted

institution. The same evening the Poet leaves for Banaras where he delivers the Convocation Address at the Hindu University on 8 February. The University confers on him the degree of D. Litt. (*Honoris Causa*). Writes a poem on Ramakrishna by way of tribute on the occasion of his centenary. On 11 and 12 December *Arupratan* is staged in Calcutta with the Poet in the role of Thakurda. On 27 December sends a message of felicitations to the President of the Indian National Congress on the occasion of its Golden Jubilee.

1936 (Age 75) : Yeats Brown of Bengal Lancer' fame visits the Poet at Santiniketan. Gives a discourse at the special service held at the Santiniketan Mandir on Gandhi's birthday on 2 October. Dramatizes the poem *Parisodh* (Retribution) and sets it to music. The new dance-drama, *Syama*, is staged in Calcutta on 10 and 11 October, the Poet being present on the stage. Jawaharlal Nehru, Congress President, pays a one-day visit to meet the Poet. Attends the anniversary of Seventh Paush (22 December) and conducts the Christmas Service.

1937 (Age 76) : Spends the early part of the year at Santiniketan. On 10 September while preparing to leave for Gwalior at the Maharaja's invitation, falls into comatose condition for nearly 48 hours. After some days of grave anxiety the Poet slowly recovers under the care and treatment of the eminent Calcutta physician, Sir Nilratan Sircar. He is brought to Calcutta on 12 October for further medical treatment. Subhaschandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru and several other Congress leaders attending a meeting of the All India Congress Committee in Calcutta visit the Poet. Gandhi, who was not keeping well at the time, is visited by the Poet. The A.I.C.C. meeting adopts a resolution of thanks-giving on the Poet's recovery and also endorses his views on the portion of the *Vande-mataram* song which could be adopted as the national anthem of India.

1938 (Age 77) : Receives the delegates of the New Education Fellowship, Lord Lothian, and Lord and Lady Brabourne in the early part of the year, one after the other. On 28 February writes an open letter to the *Manchester Guardian* on the

Government of India Act, 1935, in the course of which he says: 'It was made by politicians and bureaucrats . . . . embodies all their narrow caution and miserly mistrust. So long as you hold us in your grip you can never have either our trust or our friendship . . . The future lies in our learning to ally ourselves with those human forces in the world, wherever found, which are seeking to end altogether the exploitation of man by man nation by nation." On 1 March the Osmania University confers a D. Litt. (*Honoris Causa*) on the Poet *in absentia.*

1939 (Age 78) : On January the Poet accords a formal reception to Maharaja Bir Vikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur of Tripura and in his address of welcome recalls the many ties of friendship and affection which bind him with the House of Tripura. Subhaschandra Bose (elected Congress President a second time against the mandate of the veterans of the Congress) visits Santiniketan on 21 January and is offered the honour due to his high office at a formal function. On 31 January Jawaharlal Nehru performs the opening of Hindi-Bhavana (Department of Hindi Studies) with the Poet and Andrews present. On 2 February which is the last day of Jawaharlal Nehru's stay at Santiniketan, Subhaschandra Bose comes once again and the two leaders meet at a conference in the Poet's presence. Rajendra Prasad presides at the anniversary of Sriniketan on 6 February.

1940 (Age 79) : Writes an essay protesting against Soviet Russia's aggression in Finland. On 17 January receives the Chinese Abbot, Reverend Tai Hsu.

1941 (Age 80) : His last address on Rammohun is read at the prayer-hall on the occasion of the anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj (24 January). His birthday anniversary is observed at Santiniketan on the New Year's Day of the Bengali era 1348, corresponding to 14 April. The Poet gives his message in an address, *Sabhyatar Samkat* (*Crisis in Civilization*) which is read on the occasion. The address is widely published and creates a profound impression. On 8 May his actual birthday is celebrated all over India. At Santiniketan one of his plays is presented before him. The Maharaja of Tripura sends a

special emissary to confer on him the title of *Bharat-Bhashkar* (The Sun of India) on 13 May. On 4 June issues from his sick-bed a statement in reply to an open letter from Miss Eleanor Rathbone, M.P. Towards the end of June the Poet who had never been really able to recover from the setback of September 1940—has a relapse and his doctors advise removal to Calcutta. He leaves Santiniketan on 25 July. On the morning of 30 July he dictates his last poem in which occur the lines :

> . . . the last reward he carries
> to his treasure-house . . .
> the unwasting right to peace.

The same morning a surgical operation is performed on him. His condition rapidly deteriorates after 3 August. He breathes his last on Thursday, 7 August, shortly after 12 noon. He was 80 years 3 months at the time of his death which took place in his ancestral home in Calcutta, 6 Dwarkanath Tagore Lane, the house where he was born on Tuesday, 7 May 1861.

PART I

I

STRIVING FOR SWARAJ

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Our wise men have warned us, in solemn accents of Sanskrit, to talk away as much as we like, but never to write it down. There are proofs,—many of them,—that I have habitually disregarded this sage advice, following it only when called upon to reply. I have never hesitated to write, whenever I had anything to say, be it in prose or in verse, controversy alone excepted—for on that my pen has long ceased to function.

Such of our beliefs as become obsessions are hardly ever made up of pure reason,—our temperament, or moods of the moment, mainly go to their fashioning. It is but rarely that we believe, because we have found a good reason; we must often seek reasons because we believe. Only in Science do our conclusions follow upon strict proofs; while the rest of them, under the influence of our attractions and repulsions, keep circling round the centre of our personal predilections. This is all the more true when our beliefs is the outcome of a desire for some particular result, especially when that desire is shared by a large number of our fellow men. In such case no reason needs to be adduced in order to persuade people into a common course,—it being sufficient if such course is fairly easy, and, above all, if the hope is roused of speedy success.

It is some time since the minds of our countrymen have been kept in a state of agitation by the idea that Swaraj may be easily and speedily attained, in this unsettled atmosphere of popular excitement any attempt at a discussion of *pros* and *cons* does but

bring down a cyclonic storm, in which it becomes almost hopeless to expect the vessel of reason to make sail for any port of destination. Hitherto we had always thought that the achievement of *Swaraj* was a difficult matter. So, when it came to our ears that, on the contrary, it was extremely easy, and by no means impossible to reach in a very short time, who could have the heart to raise questions or obtrude arguments ? Those who wax enthusiastic over the prospect of a *faqir* turning a copper coin into a gold mohur, are able to do so, not because they are lacking in intellect, but because their avidity restrains them from exercising their intelligence.

Anyhow, it was only the other day that our people were beside themselves at the message that *Swaraj* was at our very door. Then when the appointed time for its advent find slipped by, it was given out that the disappointment was due to our non-fulfilment of the conditions. But few thereupon paused to consider that it was just in the fulfilment of these conditions that the difficulty lay. Is it not a self evident truth that we do not have *Swaraj* simply because we do not fulfil its conditions ? It goes without saying that if Hindu and Muslem should come together in amity and good fellowship, that would be great step toward its realisation. But the trouble always is, that Hindu and Muslem do not come together. Had their union been real, all the 365 days in the calendar would have been auspicious days for making the venture. True, the announcement of a definite date for the start has an intoxicating effect. But I cannot admit that an intoxicated state makes the journey any easier.

The appointed time has now long gone by, yet the intoxication lingers,—the intoxication which consists in a confusion of haste with speed, in a befogged reliance on one or two narrow paths as the sole means of gaining a vast realisation. Amongst those paths prominently looms the *Charka*.

And so the question has to be raised : What is this *Swaraj* ? Our political leaders have refrained from giving us any clear explanation of it. As a matter of fact we have the freedom to spin our own threat on our own *charka*. If we have omitted to avil ourselves of it, that is because the threat so spun cannot compete with the product of the power mill. No doubt it might have been otherwise if the millions of India had devoted their leisure to the *charka*, thereby reducing the exchange value of home-

spun thread. But nothing proves the hopelessness of such an expectation more than the fact that those very persons who are wielding their pens in its support are not wielding the *charka* itself.

The second point is, even if every one of our countrymen should be taken himself to spinning thread, that might somewhat mitigate their poverty, but it would not be *Swaraj*—What of that ? Is that increase of wealth a small thing for a poverty-stricken country ? What a difference it would make if our cultivators, who improvidently waste their spare time, were to engage in such productive work ! Let us concede for the moment that the profitable employment of the surplus time of the cultivator is of the first importance. But the thing is not so simple as it sounds. One who takes up that problem must be prepared to devote precise thinking and systematic endeavour to its solution. It is not enough to say : *Let them spin.*

The cultivator acquired a special skill with his hands, and a special bent of mind, by dint of consistent application to his own particular work. The work of cultivation is for him the line of least strain. So long as he is working, he is busy with one or other of the operations connected there with; when he is not so busy, he is not at work. It would be unfair to charge him with laziness on this account. Had the processess of cultivation lasted throughout the year, he also would have been at work from one end of it to the other. It is an inherent defect of all routine toil, such as is the work of cultivation, that it dulls the mind by disuse. In order to be able to go from one habitual round of daily work to a different one, in active mind is required. But this kind of manual labour, like a tram car, runs along a fixed track, and cannot take a different course with any ease, however dire the necessity. To ask the cultivator to spin, is to derail his mind. He may drag on with it for a while, but at the cost of disproportionate effort, and therefore, waste of energy.

I have an intimate acquaintance with the cultivators of at least two district of our province and I know from experience how rigorous for them are the bonds of habit. One of these districts is mainly rice-producing and their the cultivators have to toil with might and main to grow there single crop of rice. Nevertheless, in their spare time, they might have raised green vegetables round their homesteads. I tried to encourage them to do so, but failed.

The very men who willingly sweated over their rice refused to stir for the sake of vegetables. In the other district, the cultivators are busy, all the year round, with rice, jute and sugarcane, mustard and other spring crops. Such portions of their holdings as do not bear any of these, are left fallow, without any corresponding remission of rent. To this same locality come peasants from the North-west, who take up, and pay a good rent for similar waste lands and, raising thereon different varieties of melon, return home with a substantial profit. The producer of jute can by no means be called lazy. I am told there are other places in the world quite as suitable for growing jute, where the farmers nevertheless refuse to undergo the hardships of its cultivation. It would seem, therefore, that if Bengal has a monopoly of jute, that is more due to the character of her peasants than of her soil. And yet these hard-working jute cultivators, with the example before their very eyes of the profits made by those up-country melon growers, do not care to follow it in the case of their own fallow holdings by treading a path to which they are unaccustomed.

Therefore, when we are faced with any such problem, the difficulty we have to contend with is, how to draw the mind of the people out of its path of habit into a new one. I cannot believe that it is enough to indicate some easy external method; the solution, as I say, is a question of change of mentality.

It is not difficult to issue from outside the mandate : *Let Hindu and Moslem unite.* At this the obedient Hindus may flock to join the Khilafat Movement, for such conjunction is easy enough. They may even yield some of their worldly advantages in favour of the Moslems, for, through that be more difficult, it is still of the outside. But the real difficulty is for Hindus and Moslem to give up their respective prejudices which keep them apart. That is where the problem now rests. To the Hindu, the Musalman is impure : for the Mussalman, the Hindu is a *Kafir.* In spite of their longing for *Swaraj,* neither can forget this inward obsession. I used to know an anglicised Hindu who had leanings towards European fare. Everything else he would heartily relish, but he drew the line at hotel-cooked rice,—rice touched by Mussalman cooks, said he, refused to pass his lips. The same kind of prejudice which makes such rice *taboo,* stands in the way of cordial relationship. The habit of mind which religions injunctions have ingrained in us constitutes the age-old fortress which holds our anti-Moslem feeling secure

against penetration by outside *ententes,* whether on the basis of Khilafat Movement or of pecuniary pacts.

Such like problems in our country become so difficult because tbey are of the inside : the obstruction are all within our own mind, which is at once in revolt if there be any proposal for getting rid of them. That is why we fell so strongly attracted if some external solution be suggested. It is when his own character stands in the way of making a living along the beaten track, that a person becomes ready to court disaster in a desperate gamble for becoming suddenly rich. If our countrymen accept the proposition that the *charka* is the principal means of attaining *Swaraj,* then it has to be admitted that in their opinion Swaraj an external achievement. And therein lics the reason why, when the defects of character and the perversions of social custom which obstruct its realisation are kept out of sight, and the whole attention is concentrated on home-spun thread, no surprise is felt but rather relief.

In these circumstances, if we take the view that the external proverty of our country claims our foremost attention,—that one of the chief obstacles to Swaraj will be removed if our cultivators employ their leisure in productive occupations, then it is for our leaders to think out the ways and means whereby such spare time may be utilised to the best advantage. And does it not then become obvious that such advantage is best to be secured in the line of cultivation itself ?

Suppose that poverty should overtake me, then it would surely behave any adviser of mine, first of all to consider that literary work is the only one in which I can claim any length of practice. However, great may be my mentor's contempt for this profession he cannot well ignore it in advising me on how to earn a living. He may be able to shew by statistical calculations that a tea-shop in the students' quarters would yield 75 per cent profit; for accounts which neglect the human element easily run into large figures. And if such tea-shop enterprise should but assist in completing my ruin, that is not because my intellect is of a lower order than that of the successful tea vendor, but becacuse my mind is differently constituted.

It is not feasible to make the cultivator either happier or richer by thrusting aside, all of a sudden, the habits of body and mind which have grown upon him through his life. As I have

indicated before, those who do not use their minds, get into fixed habits for which any the least novelty becomes an obstacle. If an undue love for a particular programme leads one to ignore this psychological truth, that makes no difference to psychology, it is the programme which suffers. In other agricultural countries the attempt is being successfully made to lead the cultivators towards a progressive improvement of production along the line of cultivation itself, and there agriculture has made long strides forward by an intelligent application of science, the yield per unit of land being many times larger than in our country. The path which is lit up by the intellect is non an *easy*, but a *true* path, the pursuit of which shows that manhood is at work. To tell the cultivator to turn the *charka* instead of trying to get him to employ his whole energy in his own line of work, is only a sign of weakness. We casts the blame for being lazy on the cultivator, but the advice we give him amounts rather to a confession of the laziness of our own mind.

The discussion, so far, has proceeded, on the assumption that the large scale production of home-spun thread and cloth will result in the alleviation of the Country's poverty. But, after all, that is a gratuitous assumption. Those who ought to know, have expressed grave doubts on the point. It is, however, better for an ignoramus like myself to refrain from entering into this controversy. My complaint is, that by the promulgation of this confusion between *Swaraj* and *Charka*, the mind of the country is being distracted from *Swaraj*.

We must have a clear idea of the vast thing that the welfare of our country means. To confine our idea of it to the outside, or to make it too narrow, diminishes our own power of achievement. The lower the claim made on our mind, the greater the resulting depression of its vitality, the more languid dose it become. To give the *Charka* the first place in our striving for the country's welfare is only a way to make our insulted intelligence recoil in despairing inaction. A great and vivid picture of the Country's well-being in its universal aspect, held before our eyes, can alone enable our countrymen to apply the best of head and heart to carve out the way along which their varied activities may progress towards that end. If we make the picture petty, our striving becomes petty likewise. The great ones of the world who have made stupendous sacrifices for the land of their birth, or for their

intimately interrelated. To take them in isolation can lead to no real result Health and work, reason, wisdom and joy, must all be thrown into the crucible, in order that the result may be fulness of welfare. We want to see a picture of such welfare before our eyes. for that will teach us ever so much more than any amount of exhortation. We must have, before us, in various centres of population, examples of different types of revived life abounding in health and wisdom and prosperity. Otherwise we shall never be able to bring about the realisation of what *Swaraj* means, simply by dint of spinning thread, weaving *khaddar*, or holding discourses. That which we would achieve for the whole of India must be actually made true even in some small corner of it,—then only will a worshipful striving for it be born in our hearts. Then only shall we know the real value of self-determination, *na medhaya na bahudha srutena*, not by reasoning nor by listening to lectures, but by direct experience. If even the people of one village of India, by the exercise of their own powers, make their village their very own, then and there will begin the work of realising our Country as our own.

Fauna and flora take birth in their respective regions, but that does not make any such region belong to them. Man creates his own motherland. In the work of its creation as well as of its preservation, the people of the country come into intimate relations with one another, and a country so created by them they can love better than life itself. In our country its people as only born therein; they are taken no hand in its creation; therefore, between them there are no deep-seated ties of connexion, nor is any loss sustained by the whole country felt as a personal loss by the individual. We must re-awaken the faculty of gaining the motherland by creating it. The various processes of creation need all the varied powers of man. In the exercise of these multifarious powers, along many and diverse roads, in order to reach one and the same goal, we may realise ourselves in our country. To be fruitful, such exercise of our powers must begin near home and gradually spread further and further outwards. If we are tempted to look down upon the initial stage of, such activity as too small, let us remember the teaching of the Gita : *swalpamasya dharmasya travate mahato bhayat*, by the least bit of *dharma* truth) are we saved from immense fear. Truth is powerful, not in its dimensions, but in itself.

When acquaintance with, practice of and pride in co-operative self-determination shall have spread in our land, then on such broad abiding foundation alone may *Swaraj* become true. So long as we are wanting therein, both within and without, and while such want is proving the root of all our other wants,—want of food, of health, of wisdom,—it is past all belief that any programme of outward activity can rise superior to the poverty of spirit which has overcome our people. Success begets success; likewise *Swaraj* alone can beget *Swaraj.*

The right of God over the universe is His *Swaraj,*—the right to create it. In that same privilege, I say, consists our *Swaraj,* namely, our, right to create our own country. The proof of such right, as well as its cultivation, lies in the exercise of the creative process. Only by living do we show that we have life.

It may be argued that spinning is also a creative act. But that is not so : for, by turning its wheel, man merely becomes an appendage of the *charka*; that is to say, he but does himself what a machine might have done; he converts his living energy into a dead turning movement. The machine is solitary, because being devoid of mind it is sufficient unto itself and knows nothing outside itself. Likewise alone is the man who confines himself to spinning, for the thread produced by his *charka* is not for him a thread of necessary relationship with others. He was no need to think of his neighbour,—like the silkworm his activity is centred round himself. He becomes a machine, isolated, companionless. Members of Congress who spin may, while so engaged, dream of some economic paradise for their country, but the origin of their dream is elsewhere : the *charka* has no spell from which such dreams may spring. But the man who is busy trying to drive out some epidemic from his village, even should he be unfortunate enough to be all alone in such endeavour, needs must concern himself with the interests of the whole village in the beginning, middle and end of his work, so that because of this very effort he cannot help realising within himself the village as a whole, and at every moment consciously rejoicing in its creation. In his work, therefore, does the striving for Swaraj make a true beginning. When the others also come and join him, then alone can we say that the whole village is making progress towards the gain of itself which is the outcome of the creation of itself. Such gain may be called the gain of *Swaraj.* However, small the size of it may be, it

is immense in its truth.

The village of which the people come together to earn for themselves their food, their health, their education, to gain for themselves the joy of so doing, shall have lighted a lamp on the way to *Swaraj*. It will not be difficult therefrom to light others, one after another, and thus illuminate more and more of the path along which *Swaraj* will advance, not propelled by the mechanical revolution of the *charka*, but taken by the organic process of its own living growth.

2

INDIA'S SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE WAY TO IT

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Nowadays class conflicts in the West are mostly of economic origin. Miners, dock labourers, railway men, now and again, raise disturbances, for which new laws have to be made, or old laws suspended; the militia are sometimes called out, and blood shed. In that part of the world there are two parties concerned in such conflicts—those who create, and those who try to quell, the disturbance; there is no third party with a high sense of humour, to look on and mock at them from outside.

There was also a time in England, whilst its constitution was still in the process of consolidation when conflicts used to occur between Protestants and Roman Catholics, during which fair play was not always in evidence. As a matter of fact the Catholics had for long to submit to all kinds of disabilities. Even today, the people of England, as a whole, have to bear the cost of maintaining a particular religious denomination, which is manifestly unfair to those outside it. But if today these and other inequalities no longer lead in England to chronic breaches of the peace, it is beeause all sections of its people now enjoy in common a system of government that they can call their own. Had they been ruled by an outsider, all these loose joints in their system would have knocked together, making permanent fractures in it.

In the earlier history of British politics the antagonism between Scotland and England was not a little bitter; for they had real differences in language, temperament, and historical memories. But their reconcilement was brought about, because the

system of government at which they arrived was subject to their joint control; wherefore their energies were turned towards common defence and welfare. On the other hand, because the people of Ireland had not been conceded equal rights with those of England, such union between England and Ireland was never found possible.

These instances of conflict in the West may partly explain, but can never wholly justify, our own national weaknesses. For it has to be admitted that in our country there is too rigid a line of demarcation between Hindus and Moslems. Where Truth is departed from, there comes in evil and with it punishment. If religion, instead of abiding in the heart, is allowed to put its emphasis on memorised texts and outward observances, it becomes the greatest of all obstacles to peace.

I can only hope that our religions will not for ever continue to lay such stress on external observances. Another hope is that if ever Hindus and Moslems can have a common ideal of national welfare, and that ideal can find concrete shape in some system of common government, then their external differences will become negligible compared with the unification arising out of common endeavour and fellow-feeling.

I once happened to have an Englishman as a fellow passenger in a Railway compartment. Talking of the then Behar communal riots, he told me with great gusto the story of a British captain twitting a local zamindar with the words: "You can't even control your own tenants, and yet you people want Home Rule!" I did not hear what the zamindar replied, but could imagine him saying: "No, Sir, we don't want Home Rule while we are so unfit, so worthless. Meanwhile be pleased to do the controlling for us." To my companion I simply said: "These riots have not occurred during Home Rule. The mind of that hapless zamindar must have turned enviously to the troops of which the Captain had command. For one to retain the means, and another to attain the end,—this is an unheard of division of labour. Moreover, what of the communal riots under the very shadow of Fort William in Calcutta? Those Surely were as much a matter of shame to the government as to the governed."

Just here is our grievance. We have no resposibility for our own self-defence because our defence has been taken off our hands by an outside power. That is what is emasculating us, making us

both weak and resourceless. If the condition to which we have thus been reduced be mode the occasion by this same power for sneering at us, we are precluded, it is true, from giving any effective reply, but what we say in our own minds is far from parliamentary. If we had power and responsibility it would have been equally to the interest of Hindus and Moslems to maintain them intact; both parties would have taken good care not to allow license to go unchecked, and India would have made strong the foundation on which she stood.

As matters are, if on the turning of the next page of India's history, the British power were to break, and leave, amidst the ruins of its strong government, millions of weak men and women, —unused to self-reliance, incapable of self-defence, bereft of self-confidence, unfit for self-improvement, while all around them would be newly awakened powers, skilfully organised in accordance with their recently learnt lessons,—then, if for a time these hapless millions are lost in confusion, on whom must be cast the guilt of their sad fate ?

Or if we make the contrary supposition, that while governments all over the world are changing, the steel frame of the British government in India will alone endure for ever, then are we to contemplate with equanimity the prospect of an India eternally disunited, with no tie between its different sections of common endeavour and public service, with all their hopes and aspirations doomed to pettiness, their faculties warped and stunted, their future hopelessly hemmed in by the stone walls of an alien policy ?

Up till now, under British rule, we have had unified government but not unified responsibility,—that is why our union is from the outside. Such union does not bring us near, it merely keeps us side by side, so that the least shock knocks us against one another. It is an inert, material. not a live, functioning union. It is like the proximity of men sleeping on the same floor, not of men awake and marching together along the same road. There is nothing in it for us to glory or rejoice in. We may stoop low to give thanks for it, but cannot be uplifted by it.

Our old society of village communities kept us alive to our public duties. No doubt the public of those days was a limited one, inasmuch as our vision did not extend beyond the bounds of our village. Still, within those bounds, the wealthy acknowledged

the responsibility of their riches, the learned of their knowledge; the whole community had a claim on the attainments of each. It is in such expansion of individual achievement that men can take pride and find their joy.

At the present day, all responsibilities of our countrymen have been shifted from within to the outside. The government is the only appraiser of our merits, defender of our persons and property, regulator of our health and well being, dispenser of reward and of punishment. What is and what is not Hindu, is determined in their cours of law; even our intoxicants are provided for us by them; and if tigers molest our villagers, that gives a good opportunity for sport to the local magistrate and his friends.

As a result, we can no longer bear the burden of our own social regulations. The Brahmin still exacts his fees, but does not advance learning. The landlord extorts his rents, but not make the prosperity of the tenants his concern. The upper classes insist on being paid due respect by the lower, but do not look after their welfare. Our expenditure on social ceremonies is as heavy as ever, but the vast sums so spent do not circulate within the community. Communal conflict, social ostracism, the sale of religious services,—all these social evils are rampant. The cow we are feeding no longer gives us milk, but viciously turns its crooked horns on us.

But the point is not really whether government from within is more or less efficient than government from without. If men had been merely so many pieces of stone, the question would have been how best to arrange them for serving some purpose. But men must live and grow and progress. That is why it cannot but be admitted that this destruction of initiative and opportunity for self-fulfiiment, that makes despondency lie heavy as stone on the breasts of our people, is not only cruel, but vitiates the true end of government.

The self-determination we hanker after is not for the sake of wielding or flaunting power over others, nor for arming ourselves to exploit weaker peoples; nor are we obsessed with any insane desire to prove our vigour and enthusiasm for killing those who are alien to us. We are quite content to wear as our insignia the epithet of "mild Hindu," that has been conferred on us by the militarist West. We shall not flinch to bear the thorns of material loss that beset the pursuit of spiritual gain, though our rulers may

twit us for it.

All we yearn for is our natural right and responsibility of serving our motherland. The soul-destroying deprivation of these is what is gnawing at our hearts and driving us to desperation. Hence, the irrepressible eagerness of our youths to avail themselves of any opportunity to serve their countrymen. Manhood cannot flourish in the shade of protected orderliness. The deepest urge of all life is to exert itself in progressing onward. In all great peoples the acceptance of toil and tribulation, the dedication of self for the sake of great enterprises, is seen as a turbulent desire that foams and roars on its course, reckless of success or failure, removing from its path, or cascading over, all obstacles. This grand sight it is impossible to keep hidden away even from political cripples like ourselves.

That is why for our youths, in whom this life-force is naturally welling up, the torture of its being remorselessly cooped up within their bosoms is greater than the pangs of death itself. Sufficient outlet for this surging force cannot be found in volunteering for occasional flood or famine-relief work. It is only in the various pursuits of everyday life that it can find adequate room for expansion. Otherwise, its suppressed cravings become vitiated in the heat of hopeless heart-burning, giving rise to the secret violent activities that once spread over the country. This in turn leads the authorities to view with dire suspicion any organised attempt at national self-development.

Any gift implying the grant of self-determination to India, involving a diminution of British interference, is bound to be whittled down and shrunk dry before it reaches us, if it is not altogether mislaid in transit,—whence the skeletons of good intentions that strew the desert pathway of India's destiny. Those who have usurped the power of such obstruction are obsessed with their own might, their minds and hearts made impervious to the plaints of the people of India by a hard crust of racial exclusiveness. India for them means only a magnified government or merchant office.

It seems anomalous to imagine that the British should wish to keep our sight away from the grand vision of Freedom, when we consider that their own history, for the last three hundred years or so, has been one long continuous pageant of such heroic endeavour. This anomaly can, however, be explained if we take

care to remember that it is not the English people known as *great* who are ruling India, but that we are the subjects of those of them who, steeped from their youth in the acid of bureaucratic tradition, have been corroded into mere official men, reduced for us to the small measure of their special purposes.

The great Englishman has no immediate contact with India. Between him and us intervenes the small Englishman. So, we only catch glimpses of the great Englishman in the sky of English literature while the only sight he gets of us is through the reports of the bureaucratic offices and their books of account; that is to say, India is for him respresented by a mass of statistics--figures of exports and imports, income and expenditure, births and deaths, how many policemen there are to keep the peace, how many jails there are for breaches of the peace, the lengths of railway lines, the heights of college buildings. There is no department of the India office through which the things that are far greater than all these can reach any human creature in England.

In spite of all present appearances to the contrary, I steadfastly cherish the hope and belief that East and West shall meet. But to that end we, also, have our duties and responsibilities. So, long as we are small, the Englishman will remain small and try to terrorise us, for in our smallness lies his strength. But the coming age is already upon us, when the un-armed shall dare to stand up to the fully armed. On that day the victory will be not to him who can slay, but to him who can accept death. He who causes sorrow shall go under, and he who can bear suffering shall gain the final glory. Meeting crude force with soul force, man will then proclaim that he is not beast, but has overpassed the limitations of natural selection. The duty and the responsibility has been cast on us to prove these great truths.

3

THE MODERN AGE

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

I

Wherever man meets man in a living relationship, the meeting finds its natural expression in works of art, the signature of beauty in which the mingling of the personal touch leaves its memorial.

On the other hand, the relationship of pure utility humiliates man, it ignores the rights and needs of his deeper nature; it fells no compunction in maltreating and killing things of beauty that can never be restored.

Some years ago, when I set out from Calcutta on my voyage to Japan, the first thing that shocked me, with a sense of personal injury, was the ruthless intrusion of the factories for making gunny bags on both banks of the Ganges. The blow it gave to me was owing to the precious memory of the days of my boyhood when the scenery of this river was the only great thing near my birthplace reminding me of the existence of a world which had its direct communication with our innermost spirit. You all know that Calcutta is an upstart town with no depth of sentiment in her face and in her manners. It may truly be said about her genesis, in the beginning there was the spirit of the Shop which uttered through its megaphone, "Let there be the Office !" and there was Calcutta. She brought with her no dower of distinction, no majesty of noble or romantic origin; she never gathered around

her any great historical association, annals of brave sufferings, or memory of mighty deeds. The only thing which gave her the sacred baptism of beauty was the river. I was fortunate enough to be born before the smoke-belching iron dragon had devoured the greater part of the life of its banks; when the landing stairs descending into its waters, caressed by its tides, appeared to me like the loving arms of the villages clinging to it; when Calcutta, with her tilted-up nose and stony stare, had not completely disowned her fostermother, rural Bengal, and had not surrendered body and soul to her wealthy paramour, the spirit of the ledger. bound in dead leather.

But as an instance of the contrast of the different ideal of a different age, incarnated in the form of a town, the memory of my last visit to Benares comes to my mind. What impressed me most deeply, while I was there, was the mother-call of the river Ganges, which ever filled the atmosphere with an "unheard melody", attracting the whole population to its bosom every hour of the day. I am proud of the fact, that India has felt a most profound love for this river, which nourishes her civilisation on its banks, guiding its course from the silence of the hills to the sea with its myriad voices of solitude. The love of this river, which has become one with the love of the best in man, has given rise to this town as an expression of reverence. This is to show, that there are sentiments in us which are creative, which do not clamour for gain, but overflow in gifts, in spontaneous generosity of self-sacrifice.

But our minds will nevermore cease to be haunted by the perturbed spirit of the question. --"What about gunny bags?" I admit they are indispensable, and am willing to allow them a place in society, if my opponent will only admit that even gunny bags should have their limits, and will acknowledge the importance of leisure to man with space for joy and worship, and a home of wholesale privacy, with associations of chaste love and mutual service. But if this concession to humanity be denied or curtailed, and if profit and production are allowed to run amuck then they play havoc with our love of beauty, of truth, of justice, and also with our love for our fellow-beings. So it comes about that the cultivators of jute, who live on the brink of everlasting famine, are combined against, and driven to lower the price of their labours to the point of blank despair, by those who earn more than cent per

cent profit and wallow in the infamy of their wealth. The facts that man is brave and kind, that he is social and generous and self-sacrificing, have some aspect of the complete in them; but the fact that he is a manufacturer of gunny bags is too ridiculously small to claim the right of reducing his higher nature to insignificance. The fragmentariness of utility should never forget its subordinate position in human affairs. It must not be permitted to occupy more than its legitimate place and power in society, nor to have the liberty to desecrate the poetry of life, to deaden our sensitiveness to ideals, bragging of its own coarseness as a sign of virility. The pity is that when in the centre of our activities we acknowledge, by some proud name, the supremacy of wanton destructiveness, or productiveness, not less wanton, we sout out all the lights of our souls, and in that darkness our conscience, and consciousness of shame, are hidden and our love of freedom is killed.

I do not for a moment mean to imply that in any particular period of history men were free from the disturbance of their lower passions. Selfishness ever had its share in their government and trade. Yet there was a struggle to maintain a balance of forces in society; and our passions cherished no delusions about their own rank and value. They contrived no clever devices to hoodwink our moral nature. For, in these days our intellect was not tempted to put its weight into the balance on the side of over-greed.

But in recent centuries a devasting change has come in our mentality with regard to the acquisition of money. Whereas in former ages men treated it with condescension, even with disrespect, now they bend their knees to it. That it should be allowed a sufficiently large place in society, there can be no question; but it becomes an outrage when it occupies those seats which are specially reserved for the immortals, by bribing us, by tampering with our moral pride, by recruiting the best strength of society on its side in a traitor's campaign against human ideals, disguising, with the help of pageantry and pomp, its true insignificance. Such a state of things has come to pass, because, with the help of science, the possibilities of profit have suddenly become immoderate. The whole of the human world, throughout its length and breadth, has felt the gravitational pull of a giant planet of greed, with its concentric rings of innumerable satellites,

causing to our society a marked deviation from its moral orbit. In former times, the intellectual and spiritual powers of this earth upheld their dignity of independence and were not giddily rocked on the tides of the money market. But, as in the last fatal stages of disease, so this fatal influence of money has got into our brain and affected our heart. It has like a usurper, occupied the throne of higher social ideals, using every means, by menace and threat, to take away our right and by offer of temptation even the desire to judge it. It has not only science for its ally, but other forces also that have some semblance of religion, such as nation-worship and the idealizing of organised selfishness. Its methods are far-reaching and sure. Like the claws of a tiger's paw they are softly sheathed. Its massacres are invisible, because they are fundamental, attacking the very roots of life. Its plunder is ruthless behind a scientific system of screens, which have the formal appearance of openness and responsibility to enquiries. By white-washing its own stains it keeps respectability unblemished. It makes a liberal use of falsehood in diplomacy, only feeling embarrassed when its evidence is disclosed by others of the trade. An unscrupulous system of propaganda paves the way for wide-spread misrepresentation. It works up the crowd psychology through regulated hypnotic doses at repeated intervals; administered in bottles with moral labes upon them of soothing colours. In fact, man has been able to make his pursuit of power easier today by his art of mitigating the obstructive forces that come from the higher region of his humanity. With his cult of power and his idolatry of money, he has, in a great measure, reverted to his primitive barbarism,—a barbarism whose path is lit up by the lurid light of intellect. For, barbarism is the simplicity of a superficial life. It may be bewildering in its surface adornments and complexities, but it lacks the ideal to impart to it the depth of moral responsibility.

II

Society suffers from a profound feeling of unhappiness, not so much when it is in material poverty, as when its members are deprived of a large part of their humanity. This unhappiness goes on smouldering in the subconscious mind of the community till its life is reduced to ashes, or a sudden combustion is produced.

The repressed personality of man generates an inflammable moral gas deadly in its explosive force.

We have seen in the late war, and also in some of the still more modern events of history, how human individuals, freed from moral and spiritual bonds, find a boisterous joy in a debauchery of destruction. There is generated a disinterested passion of ravage. Through such catastrophe we can realize what formidable forces of annihilation are kept in check in our communities by bonds of social ideas, nay, made into multitudinous manifestations of beauty and fruitfulness. Thus we know that evils are, like metears, stray fragments of life, which need the attraction of same great ideal in order to be assimilated with the wholesomeness of creation. The evil forces are literally outlaws; they only need the control and cadence of spiritual laws to change them into good. The true goodness is not in the negation of badness, it is in the mastery of it. Goodness is the miracle which turns the tumult of chaos into a dance of beauty,

In modern society, the ideal of wholeness has lost its force. Therefore, its different sections have become detached and resolved into their elemental character of forces. Labour is a force; so also is Capital; so are the Government and the people; so are Man and Woman. It is said that when the forces lying latent in even a handful of dust are liberated from their bond of unity, they can lift the buildings of a whole neighbourhood to the height of a mountain. Such disfranchised forces, irresponsible freebooters, may be useful to use for certain purposes; but human habitations, standing secure on their foundations, are better for us. To own the secret of utilizing these forces is a proud fact for us, but the power of self-control and self-dedication of love is a truer subject for the excultation of mankind. The genii of the Arabian Nights may have in their magic their lure and fascination for us. But the consciousness of God is of another order, and infinitely more precious in imparting to our minds ideas of the spiritual power of creation. Yet these genii are abroad everywhere; and even now, after the late war, their devotees are getting ready to play further tricks upon humanity, by suddenly spiriting it away to some hill-top of desolution.

III

We know that when at first any large body of people in their

history became aware of their unity, they expressed it in some popular symbol of divinity. For they felt that their combination was not an arithmetical one; its truth was deep er than the truth of number. They felt that their community was not a mere agglutination, but a creation, having upon in the living touch of the infinite Person. The realisation of this truth having been an end in itself,—a fulfilment,—gave meaning to self-sacrifice, to acceptance even of death.

But our modern education is producing a habit of mind which is ever weakening in us the spiritual apprehension of truth, the truth of a person as the ultimate reality of existence. Science has its true sphere in analysing this world as a construction; just as grammar has its legitimate office in analysing the syntax of a poem. But the world as a creation is not a construction; it is also more than a syntax. It is a poem, which we are apt to forget, when grammar takes exclusive hold of our minds.

Upon the loss of this sense of a universal personality, which is religion, the reign of the machine and of method has been firmly established, and man, humanly speaking has been made a homeless, tramp. And, as nomands, ravenous and restless, the men from the West have come to us. They have exploited Eastern humanity for sheer gain of power. This meeting of men has not yet received the blessing of God. For it has kept us apart, though railway lines are laid far and wide, and ships are playing from shore to shore to bring us together.

It has been said in the Upanishads :

Yastu sarvani bhutani atmanyevanupashyati
Sarva bhuteshu chatmanam na tato vijugupsate.

"He who sees all things in Atma, in the infinite spirit, and the infinite spirit, in all beings, remains no longer unrevealed."

In the modern civilization, for which an enormous number of men are used as materials, and human relationships have in a large measure become utilitarian, man is imperfectly revealed. His revelation does not lie in the fact that he is a power but that he is a spirit. The prevalence of the theory which realises the power of the machine in the universe, and organizes men into a machine, is like eruption of Etna, tremendous in its force, in the outburst of fire and fume; but its creeping lava covers up human shelters made by the ages and its ashes smother life.

IV

The terribly efficient method af repressing personality in the individuals and the races who have failed to resist it, has in the present scientific age spread all over the world; and in consequence there have appeared signs of a universal disruption which seems not far off. Faced with the possibility of such a disaster, one which is sure to affect the successful peoples of the world in their intemperate prosperity,—the great Powers of the West are seeking peace, not by curbing there greed, or by giving up the exclusive advantages which they have unjustly acquired, but by concentrating their forces for mutual security.

But can powers find their equilibrium in themselves? Power has to be made secure not only against power, but also against weakness; for there lies the peril of its losing balance. The weak are as great a danger for the strong, as quicksands for an elephant. They do not assist progress, because they do not resist; they only drag down. The people who grow accustomed to wield absolute power over others are apt to forget that by doing so they generate an unseen force which some day rends that power into pieces. The dumb fury of the down-trodden finds its awful support from the universal law of moral balance. The air, which is so thin and unsubstantial, gives birth to storms that nothing can resist. This has been proved in history over and over again, and stormy forces arising from the revolt of insulted humanity are openly gathering in the air at the present time. Yet the psychology of the strong stubbornly refuses the lesson and despises to take count of the terribleness of the weak. This is the latent ignorance, that, like an unsuspected worm, burrows under the bulk of the prosperous. Have we never read of the castle of power, securely buttressed on all sides, in a moment dissolving in air, at the explosion caused by the weak and outraged besieger? Politicians calculate upon the number of mailed hands that are kept on the sword-hilts; they do not possess the third eye to see the great invisible hand that clasps in silence the hand of the helpless, and waits its time. The strong form their league by a combination of powers, driving the weak to form their own leagu along with their God. I know I am crying in the wilderness, when I rise the voice of warning and while the West is busy with its organisation of a machine-made peace, it will still continue to nourish with its iniquities the underground

forces of earthquake in the Eastern Continent. The West seems unconscious that science, by providing it with more and power, is tempting it to suicide, encouraging it to accept the challenge of the disarmed, not knowing that the challenge comes from a higher source.

Two prophecies about the world's salvation are cherished in the hearts of the two great religions of the world. They represent the highest expectation of man thereby indicating his faith in a truth which he instinctively considers as ultimate, the truth of love. These prophecies have not for their vision the fettering of the world, and reducing it to tameness, with the closelinked power forged in the factory of a political steel trust. One of these religions has for its meditation the image of Buddha who is to come, Maitreya, the Buddha of love. And he is to bring peace. The other religion waits for the coming of Christ. For Charist preached peace when he preached love, when he preached the oneness of the Father with the brothers who are many. And this was the truth of peace. He never held that peace was the best policy. For policy is not truth. The calculation of self-interest can never successfully fight the irrational force of passion, the passion which is perversion of love, and which can only be set right by the truth of love. So long as the powers build a league on the foundation of their desire for safety and the securest enjoyment of gains, for the consolidation of the past injustice, for putting off the raparation of wrongs, while their fingers still wriggle for greed, and still reek of blood, rifts will appear in their union and conflicts in future will take greater force and magnitude. It is the political and commercial egoism which is the evil harbinger of war. By different combinations, it changes its shape and dimensions but not its nature. This egoism is still held almost as sacred as religion; and such a religion, by a mere change of temple, and by new committees of priests, will never save men. We must know that, as, through science and commerce, the realisation of the unity of the material world gives us power, so the realisation of the great spiritual Unity of Man alone can give us peace.

4

THE UNION OF CULTURES

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

It cannot but be admitted that this is a day of victory for the people of the West. The world is theirs to draw upon as they please and their stores are overflowing. We are left standing at a distance, agape, watching our share growing less and less; and with the fire of our hunger blazes the fire of our wrath. We wish we could have the opportunity of getting hold of the man who has been eating our share of the food. But so far he has got hold of us, and the opportunity still remains in his hands, and has not reached us at all.

But why does the chance not come to us ? Why is the enjoyment of the earth's plenty for them alone ? Surely because of some underlying truth. It is not a case of banding ourselves together in a particular way so as to be able to deprive them and provide for ourselves. The matter is not quite so simple as that. It is mere folly to expect to get the locomotive under control by hitting the driver on the head : for it is not the man but his science which makes the engine go. So the fire of our wrath will not serve the purpose; we must acquire the requisite science, if we covet the boon which Truth has in her gift.

It is like a father with two sons. The father drives his own motor car and has promised it to the son who learns first how to drive. One of the sons is alert and full of curiosity. His eye is always on the driving to see how it is done. The other one is excessively good natured. His reverent gaze is always on his

father's face. He pays no regard to what the hands are doing with lever and wheel. The clever one soon picks up the science of motor driving, and one fine day he drives off all by himself, with exultant toots of the horn. So absorbed does he become in the joy of his new acquisition that he forgets even the existence of his father. But the father does not punish him for the liberty he is taking, nor take the car away from him; for he is pleased that his son should succeed. The other son, when he sees his brother careering madly over his fields, playing havoc with his corn, dare not stand in the way to protest, even in the name of their father; for that would mean certain death. So he keeps his gaze fixed on his father's face, saying that this is all in all to him.

But whoever contemns the useful, saying he has no use for it, simply courts suffering. Every utility has its rightful claim, the ignoring of which entails a permanent slavery in the way of payment of interest until its dues are fully met. The only way to get rid of the school master's importunity is to do one's lessons properly.

There is an outside aspect of the world where it is simply an immense machine. In this aspect, its laws are fixed and do not yield by a hair's breadth either this way or that. This mechanical world gets in our way at every step; and he who, through laziness or folly, tries to evade its laws, does not succeed in cheating the machine, but only himself. On the other hand, he who has taught himself its working is able not only to avoid its obstruction, but to gain it for an ally, and so is enabled to ride swiftly over the paths of the material world. He reaches the place of his quest first, and has his fill of the good things there. But those who have lagged behind, jogging along unaided, arrive late to find very little left over for themselves.

Since these are the facts, merely to revile the science by which Westerners have gained their victory in the modern world, will not tend to relieve our sufferings, but will rather add to the burden of our sins. For this science which the West has mastered is true. If you say, it is not their science, but their satanic abuse of it to which you object, that point need not disturb us; for we may be certain that the satatic part of it will be the death of them, because Satan's way is not true.

The beasts live if they get food, and die if they get hurt. They accept what comes, without question. But one of the

greatest traits of man is his habit of protesting. Unlike the beast, he is a rebel by nature. Man has achieved his glorious position in the history of the world because he has never been able to accept as final what has been imposed upon him without his concurrence or co-operation. In short, man is by no means a mild creature only; he is ever in revolt. From the beginning of his career, man has sworn to sway the world of events. How ? By conquering it, or else coming to an understanding with the forces of which it is the resultant. He will never be content to be merely a fact; he needs must be a factor. He began with magical practices, because at first it seemed to him that whatever was happening was due to some wonderful magic at work behind the scenes. He felt that he also could take a hand in it, if he could not master the art. The activities which began as magic ended in science, but the motive in both cases has been the refusal to be subservient to the blind forces of nature. Those, whose efforts were successful, attained the mastery over the material world, and were no longer its slaves.

The belief in universal, immutable laws, is the basis of science, and loyalty to this belief has let to victory. Secure in this loyalty, the people of the West are winning their way through the obstructions and difficulties of the material world. But those who have held on to a lingering faith in magic have failed to acquire control over the world's mechanism, and are being defeated at every turn. At a time when we were still busy invoking the exorciser against ill and the fortune-teller against poverty and misfortune, while we were content to seek protection against small-pox from Sitala Devi, and relied on charms and spells for the destruction of our enemies, in Europe a woman asked Voltaire, whether it was true that incantations could kill a flock of sheep. She got the reply that doubtless they could, provided there was enough arsenic. I do not mean that there is no belief in magic in any corner of Europe today; but certainly belief in the efficacy of arsenic is universal. That is why they can kill when they want to, and we have to die even when we do not.

It is a platitude to be saying today that the phenomenal world is only a manifestation of universal law, and that, through the law of reason, we realise the laws of the material world. It is because we know such power to be inherent in us, that we can take our ultimate stand on our own selves. But he who, in his commerce with the universe, cannot get rid of that habit of looking

to accidental interventions, tends to rely on anything and everything except himself. One who doubts that his intelligence will avail ceases to question, or to experiment. He casts about for some external master, and as a result is exploited, right and left, beginning from police officers and ending with malaria-breeding mosquitos. Cowardliness of intellect is a fertile source of feebleness of power.

From what period did political liberty begin to evolve in the West ? In other words, when did the people of the West begin to realise, the political power was not the privilege of special individuals or classes, but depended on their own consent? It was from the time that their pursuit of Science freed them from nameless fears, and they discovered that only those laws were true which could not be distorted or diverted by anyone's whim or fancy.

Giant Russia was so long the slave of her Czars, because her people relied in every matter on Providence and not in their own powers. Even now, when her Czar is gone that power which has taken his place is but dragging her through a sea of blood to the barren shore of starvation. The reason is that self-rule cannot be established through outside agency, but must be based on that self-reliance which is born of trust in one's own intellect.

I was once engaged in trying to improve one of our Bengal villages. There had been a fire and I asked the villagers how it was they had not been able to save a single homestead ? "It was our fate !" they exclaimed. "Not fate," said I, "but the lack of wells. Why not make wells ?" "That will be as the master pleases," was the reply. So it comes to pass that the people, whose homesteads are gutted by fate and whose wells await the master's pleasure, may lack all else but never a master.

From the very beginning God has given us Swarajya in His universe. That is to say He has given us for ourselves universal laws independent of Himself. We can not be prevented from bringing these under our control by anyone or anything except our own folly. So the Upanishad has it, that God has given us laws for our own material provisions, immutable for all time. That is to say those laws hold good for all people, and all periods, and all occasions. Had this not been so, man would have remained weakly dependent on God at every step, all his energies exhausted in propitiating,

now this intermediary, now the other, in a chronic state of abject fear. But our God-given Magna Charta of Swaraj sets us for ever free from the wiles of all pretending intermediaries,—with our freedom firmly based on well-ordered and enduring laws. In the glowing letters of sun, moon and stars, God gives us his message : "You have no need of my help at every turn in the material world. I stand aside. On the one hand, you have the laws of matter; on the other, the laws of your mind. Use them together, and grow in greatness. The empire of the universe is yours; yours its wealth, yours its armoury of forces. May yours be the victory !"

He who accepts this charter of material Swaraj has the opportunity to achieve all other kinds of Swaraj and also to keep them when achieved. But those, who surrender their intellect to the slave-driver, have no help but to be slaves in politics as well. Those who insist on invoking masters, where God Himself has refrained from asserting His own mastery, those who court insult where God has granted them dignity,—their self-rule will certainly mean rule after rule, the only doubt being as to that little prefix "self".

The science of material existence is in the keeping of the professors of the West. This is the science which gives us food and clothing, health and longevity and preserves us from the attacks of matter, brute and barbarian. This is the science of the unchangeable laws of matter, and self-rule can only be achieved when these are brought into harmony with the laws of our mind. There is no other way.

Let us consider the case of a departure from this truth. Take the idea that, if a Mussalman draws water from the well of a Hindu, the water becomes impure. This is a confusion indeed ! For, water belongs to the world of matter, and impurity to the realm of the spirit. Had it been said, that if the Hindu contemns the Mussalman, this shows the impurity of his mind, the proposition would have been intelligible, it would be wholly a spiritual question, But when impurity is imputed to the Mussalman's vessel, then that which belongs to the category of the material is taken entirely outside the scope of material laws. The intellect is defrauded of its legitimate scope. The Hindu disciple of the West will urge that this imputation of impurity is only a religious way of promulgating a sanitary doctrine. Sanitation. However, takes no account of moral purity. The answer is given us ; "But it is

only put thus in order to induce people, who have no faith in Science, to obey its laws." This is not a right reply. For if external compulsion be once brought in, it comes to stay. Those for whom it is made necessary, lose all initiative of their own and get into the habit of depending on injunctions. Furthermore, if truth has to be bolstered up by untruth, it ends by getting smothered. By using the phrase 'morally impure' where 'physically unclean' is meant, truth is made difficult of apprehension. Whether a thing is unclean or not can be proved. And if uncleanlines be the charge, a comparative inquiry into the vessels and wells of Hindu and Moslem should be made, and we should find out if there is anything less sanitary in the Moslem water arrangements than in those of the Hindu. Uncleanliness itself being an external fault, it can be remedied by external means. But an allegation of impurity takes the question out of the jurisdiction of the ordinary mind, and makes it a matter of religion. Is that a sound method of achieving the desired object? To keep the intellect in a state of delusion cannot be the way to attain high moral excellence. Untruth from the teacher, together with blindness in the pupil, will never create a spiritually healthy society.

So, if we call Western Science 'impure', merely because it was discovered in the West, we shall not only be unable to master it, but shall also be placing in a bad light that Eastern Science which teaches of moral purity.

Here I am apprehensive of another argument. Many will ask, Whether, when the West was still savage, clothed in skins and living by hunting, we in the East had not been able to feed and clothe ourselves? When they fared forth merely for plunder, had we not evolved a political common-wealth? Certainly, we were then far more advanced than the West. But the reason was that, in those days, we in the East had a superior knowledge of Science and its laws. We had then the knowledge of cultivation and weaving. That scientific knowledge went far further than mere skill in hunting which the West then possessed. It requires more science to conduct a stable government than to hunt wild beasts. How then did the parts become reversed? It was not by any trick of fate. It was by no luck or magic. Rather it was due to the West learning the same Science which the East had learnt before, and to a still more useful purpose. Therefore, it is not by

looking to some external force that we can now compete with the West. We can resist their onslaught only if we make their Science our own. To say this implies that the greatest of our problems in India is the problem of Education.

But at this point in the argument, I have to answer the further question, whether I have found satisfaction in that aspect of power, which the West is now presenting to mankind. My answer would be, 'No'. What I saw did not satisfy me. The picture was that of self-aggrandisement, not that of happiness. For seven months at a stretch. I have lived in the giant's Castle of Wealth, in America. Through my hotel window, sky-scrapers frowned on me. They only made me think of the difference between Lakshmi, the Goddess of grace, who transmutes wealth into well-being, and the ugly god Mammon, who represents the spirit of insensate accumulation. The process of piling up has no ultimate end in view. Twice two are four, twice four are eight, twice eight are sixteen, the figures leap frog-like over increasing spans. He, who is obsessed by their stride, becomes intoxicated by it and revels in the glory of mere multiplication. But, what oppressiveness it produces in the mind of an onlooker, I can best explain by an analogy.

Once I was in a house-boat on the brimming autumn river, seated at the window on the eve of the full moon. Not far off, moored along-side the bank, there was an up country cargo boat, whose crew were enthusiastically engaged in entertaining themselves. Some of them had tom-toms, others had cymbals; none of them had a voice; but all of them had muscles beyond any possibility of question ! And the beats of their clanging sped on from double-quick to quadruple-quick time, with the stimulus of its own frenzy. Ten o'clock passed, eleven o'clock passed; it was well on towards midnight, yet they would not stop. Why should they ? Had there been a song, there would have been some natural pause. Anarchic rhythem, on the other hand, has movement, but no rest; excitement, but no satisfaction. Those rhythm-maniacs on the cargo boat had no doubt that they were scaling the topmost heights of enjoyment. But what of poor me ?

I was much in the same plight over there on the other side of the Atlantic. The *crescendo* of their rhythmic advance like a wilderness of bricks and mortar was obvious. But where was the

song ? That was the burdening question. And standing before the forbidding might of their towering opulence, the son of indigent downtrodden India was left cold, murmuring—"What then ?"

I am not for emptiness, in the garb of renunciation. External restraint is true, only when it is the expression of internal fulness,—just as time and tune are kept properly regulated because the artist is full of his song. Unmitigated noise has no occasion for disciplined restraint. If there be the truth called Love, at the heart, enjoyment must be restrained, service must be true that is to say, such a process of relisation needs the spirit of charity to help it. The renunciation, which is in the chastity of love, is the true renunciation. The union of the Goddess of Plenitude with the God who needs no wealth is the true union.

When I was in Japan, the spirit of old Japan gave me a profound pleasure. Old Japan had found Beauty reigning on the lotus throne of her heart. In her dress and ornament, in her dwellings and furniture, in her work and play, in her rites and ceremonials, she expressed in various forms the One who is beauty. Utter penury is as unmeaning as lavish profusion. The spirit of old Japan represented neither, but rather the fulness of perfection. Such fulness makes man's heart hospitable, its passion is for welcome and not for rejection. Side by side with the old, I have also seen the modern Japan. Here the spirit of the rhythm-maniac has assumed control, and its din mocks the moonlight.

By all this, I do not mean that railways and telegraphs are not needed. They have their use, but not their message. Where man has needs, he must furnish himself with materials; but where he has fulness, there is manifest his immortality; Man's envy and hatred are in the region of his material needs, the region where he is in want. Here he erects his barricades and maintains his guards. Here he is for self-aggrandisement and for the exclusion of others. But where he is immoral he displays, not things, but his soul. He invites all to enter. His distribution does not mean diminution; and so peace reigns.

When Europe was opening out the mystery chambers of the Universe with the keys of Science, she found at every step fixed laws. And their constant presence in her field of vision ever since has caused her to forget that there is something more behind these

laws, which has its harmony of delight in accord with our complete humanity. By the help of natural laws we achieve success, but man aspires to gain something greater than success. The laws which the tea-garden manager imposes on his coolies, if well devised, tend to increase his output. But where the manager's friends are concerned, he does not dream of efficient laws. In dealing with his friends he does not increase his output; he spends his tea in entertainment. It is well to believe in the laws which make for efficiency. But if ever it is believed, that the truth of friendship is not a part of an infinite truth, then that belief tends to destroy our humanity itself. We cannot make friends with a machine. Therefore, if we cease to be aware of anything beyond mechanism, then our personality which is ever seeking its own affinity in other persons, finds no permanent refuge. The West, in its one-sided pursuit of Science, has been steadily thrusting personality further and further into the back-ground till hardly any room has been left for it. If our own one-sided spiritual tendency of mind has made us lose our way and left us stranded in the quagmire of weakness and povery, the limping gait of the West has taken it no nearer, from its own side, to humanity's goal.

True, it is difficult to cope with those who consistenly keep to the tea-garden-manager outlook on the universe; for they have enlisted the services of the genie of efficiency. The good natured man in variably gets caught by their recruiters, and once in their net, there is no escape. He has no conception of the value of fixed laws of the world. He insists on pinning his faith just where he should not, whether it be on the unluckiness of Thursday, the virtue of talismans, the trustworthiness of touts, or the honesty of tea-garden recruiters. But even the most helplessly good natured man has a place, beyond the reach of laws, where he can take his stand and say : "God grant I may never be born, despite my trials and troubles, to be a tea-garden manager !"

And yet the tea-garden manager also has his own methods of benevolence. He makes sanitary, dwellings for his coolies, soundly and symmetrically built, and his arrangements for their supplies are admirable. But this non-human benevolence is but an appendage of efficiency. It helps to increase the profits; it bestows a kind of benefit upon the human tools. But from that springs not even a fraction of true happiness.

Let no one imagine that I am referring to the relations between the Western masters and their Eastern servants only. The undue stress laid on the mechanical side of the world, both in external and internal relations, has similarly created a split in the polity of the West. If the mechanical bonds of association be made into a fetish, the living bonds of voluntary fellowship slacken. And this, in spite of the fact that these mechanical bonds make for extraordinary mechnical efficiency. Commodities multiple, markets, spread, tall buildings pierce the sky. Not only so, but in education, healing and the amenities of life, man also gains real success. That is because the machine has its own truth. But this very success makes the man, who is obsessed by its mechanism, hanker for more and more mechanism And as his greed continually increases, he has less and less compunction in lowering man's true value to the level of his own machine.

Greed is not an ideal,—it is a passion. Passion cannot create. So when any civilisation gives that first place to greed, the soul relation between man and man is servered; and the more luxurious such a civilisation grows in pomp and power, the poorer it becomes in truth of soul. A picture is a creation, because it is the harmony of many lines, related to one another. An engineer's plan is not a picture, because the lines there are bound to each other by some external necessity. When greed of success is the main nexus between man and man, Society becomes a huge plan and ceases to be picture of the ideal. Man's spiritual relations are lost sight of; mony becomes the prime mover; the capitalist the driver; and the rest of mankind merely the fuel for the running of the machine. It is possible to measure the value of such civilisation in terms of the speed of its progress. But man, at the bottom of his heart, does not worship Mammon, and so has no real happiness in the triumphal progress of his car. Because his faith in Mammon is wanting, the cords, by which man is bound to Mammon's service, are not bonds of loyalty, but shackles. And man ever revolts when he feels himself shackled. The dark clouds of this social revolt lower only too dismally over the West. There the union, devised for exploitation has ended in disruption. In India the union, imposed by customary rule, has resulted in emasculation. Because traditional customs and professional dealings are not ideals, therefore, they make their arrangement by keeping man's soul out of the account.

What is the ideal ? Jesus Christ said : "I and may father are

one." Here is one ideal. "My unity with my father," is a true unity. But the unity of the coolie with the manager is not true. Again a great ideal has been given utterance to in the Isha Upanishat. "All that moves in this moving world is enveloped by God. Therefore, enjoy by renunciation; never covet others' possessions." I have already referred in terms of condemnation to the greed which has become the dominant motive in the West. Why do we condemn it ? The Rishi tells us the reason,—"Do not covet." Why should not covet ? Because truth cannot be obtained through greed. But if I say, "I want my enjoyment rather than truth." Well, the Rishi also says, "Enjoy." But there can be no enjoyment outside truth. What then is the truth ? It is this : "All that moves in this moving world is enveloped by God." Had "all that moves in the world" been itself the ultimate truth, then to keep piling up would have been the best think to do; and greed would have been the most efficient of man's virtues. But the truth being this, that God is there, enveloping all things, we have to enjoy this truth with our soul, and for such enjoyment renunciation is needed, not greed. During my seven months' stay in America, the land of mountain-high piles of lucre, I have watched this striving in the reverse direction. There, "all that moves in this moving world" has become prominent. God, who "envelops all things" has become obscurred in the thick dust of dollars. Therefore, in America, the injunction to enjoy is not observed with the help of truth, but with the help of money. Truth gives us Unity. Money sets up separation. Furthermore, it keeps our soul empty. Therefore, it causes in us a hunkering to fill that emptiness from outside, and we pursue the path of multiplying numbers in hot haste. While our desire runs at a break-neck pace, jumping from one figure to another in the multiplication table, we grow dizzy and forget that whatever else we may have been acquiring, it is not happiness.

Our Rishis have told us that satisfaction is only to be found in the One. Apples fall one after another. The truth about their falling cannot be arrived at by counting them; arithmetical progression marches on indefinitely and the mind turns away unsatisfied from each fresh enumeration, saying : "What does it all mean ?" But when innumerable falls find their unity in the principle of gravitation, the intellect at last find satisfaction and can say : "Enough, I have found the truth."

And what of the truth of Man. It is not in the Census Report, not in an interminable series of figures. Man is expressed, says the Upanishat, when he realises all creation in himself and himself in all creation. Otherwise his truth is obscured. There is a telling example of this in our history. When the Lord Buddha realised humanity in a grand synthesis of unity, his message went forth to China as a draught from the fountain of immortality. But when the modern empire-seeking merchant, moved by his greed, refused allegiance to this truth of unity, he had no qualms in sending to China the deadly opium poison, nay, in thrusting it down her throat at the cannon's mouth. What could be a better illustration of how the soul of man is revealed, and how it is obscured ?

Many at the present moment will exclaim : "That is just what we were saying. How can we possibly maintain relations with those, who only know how to divide, whose rapacious maw continually opens wide and wider ? They know nothing of the spirit of the Infinite which is all in all to us. They follow the cult of the finite. Must we not keep at arm's length their pernicious teaching and culture ?"

But this attitude is also one of division, while it has not even the merit af worldly prudence behind it. India's ancient teaching was not this. Manu says : "Restraint cannot be practised so well by leaving the world, as by remaining in it purified by wisdom." That is because the responsibility of the material world is also on us and cannot be shirked, if we would do justice to the responsibilities of the world of the spirit. So the Upanishat says : "Rescue yourself from death by the cult of the finite, and then by the cult of the infinite you shall attain immortality." Shukra, the preceptor of the Titans, was master of the art of meterials existence; and in his school Kacha, the emissary of the Gods, had to gain admission in order to learn the secret of immortality.

One of the first steps in the culture of the Soul is to free it from the tyranny of matter. This is the basic effort which must be made to start with; and unless the foundation be thus well and truly laid, the powers of the majority of men will be exhausted in their struggles to stave off sheer physical starvation. It is quite true, that the West has kept its head bent to the ground and become so absorbed in the spade work that no time has been left

to lift its head upwards. Neverthless, it will not do for those, who aspire to live in the light and air of the upper storey, to despise the spade work itself. In the region of the spirit, our seers have told us, ignorance is bondage, knowledge is freedom. The same is true in the material world. Those who do not know its laws are its slaves, those who do are emancipated. The bondage of external forces is an illusion which science alone can dispel.

Anyhow, the Western continents have been striving for liberation from the *maya* of matter, striking hard whenever they encounter any of the roots of that ignorance which breeds hunger and thirst, disease and want, or other ills of mundane life. In a world, they have been engaged in securing for man protection against physical death. On the other hand, the striving of the Eastern peoples has been to win for man his spiritual kingdom, to lead him to immortality. By their present separateness, East and West alike are now in danger of losing the fruits of their age-long labours. That is why the Upanishat, from the beginning, has enunciated the principle, which yet may serve to unite them. "Gain protection," it says, "from death by the cult of the finite, and then by the cult of the infinite you shall attain immortality." "All that moves in the moving world" is the province of Science. "God envelops all this" is this province of the philosophy of the Infinite. When the Rishi enjoins us to combine them both, then that implies the union of the East and the West. For want of that union, the East is suffering from poverty and inertia and the West from lack of peace and happiness.

There is a danger of my being misunderstood as to what I mean by Union. I should like to make that point quite plain to my readers. Uniformity is not unity. Those who destroy the independence of other races, destroy the unity of all races of humanity. Modern Imperialism is that idea of Unity, which the python has in swallowing other live creatures. I have said before, that, if the spiritual altogether swallows up the material interest of man the cannot be called harmony. But when the spiritual and the material keep separate, in their own respective provinces, then they can find their unity. In like manner, when we respect the true individuality of man, then we can discover their true unity.

While Europe, after the great war, has been yearning for peace, the smaller nations have been more and more insistent in claiming self-determination. If a new era is really to be ushered

in, it must be signalised by the overthrow of the monster, Wealth, and the monster, Empire, and also of the enormity of organisations. The true unity must be established upon true units. Those who co-operate with the New Age must cultivate their own individuality in order to attain successfully the spirit that shall unite. They must remember that Freedom (which is the great quest) is not of this or that nation, but of universal man.

The true that "the man who knows others as himself is truly revealed" is not only to be found in the pages of man's scriptures. Its working can be seen throughout human history. In the beginning, we see man gathered into separate groups within barries of mountain and ocean. As soon as man came into touch with man, the problem of his truth as a member of the human race demanded attention. Whenever men came together, but were unable to unite, the lost their truth. Those of them, who, having come into contact, hit out wildly against one another, none trusting the other, each trying to gain the advantage, have all disappeared from the face of the earth. And those, who have tried to realised the one Soul in the souls of all, have developed into great peoples.

Thanks to Science, so many vehicles of communication are speading over land and water and even through the air, that today there are no longer any geographical barriers. Now, not only individual men, but whole nations have come into contact, and the problem has become acute. Those whom Science has brought together how shall man put asunder ? If the conjunction of man is a real union, then all goes well, otherwise nearness produces conflict. Such an age of universal conflict has come. The outward forces which are bringing men together are running at a great speed; the inner forces which make men united are lagging behind. It is as if a locomotive were to rush on with its train, the driver left behind wringing his hands in despair, while a cheering crowd of onlookers are lost in admiration at its headlong speed, crying "This is progress indeed ! And we, the mild men of the East, who are in the habit of trudging along on foot, how can we possibly bear the brunt of the collision ? Things which are near us and yet keep aloof, if they have their movement, always give us shocks. Such a conjunction of shocks may not be comfortable, but in certain circumstances, it may be wholesome.

However, that may be, nothing is more obvious than the fact,

that nations have come together, but yet are not united. The agony of this possess on the whole world. Why is it, that, in spite of its torture, the world can find no solution ? Because, even those, who had mastered the art of uniting within their own boundaries, have not yet learnt the secret of uniting outside them. The barrier, by limiting truth, makes truth itself at first easier of comprehension; so man is apt to give the credit to the barrier and not to the truth; he worships the priest to the exclusion of the divinity, and fears the policemen more than the king.

Nations, have risen on the strength of truth, but it was not their Nationalism which was true. And yet human sacrifices are being offered to this barrier-god. So long as the victims were of alien race no question arose; but all of a sudden, in 1914, the votaries developed a mania for sacrificing one another. Then the doubt arose : "Is this after all the right kind of household god, who fails to distinguish between kindred and stranger ? While he was fastening his fangs on the limbs of the offerings from the East, sucking out their substance, the festivity of the sacrificial rites waxed fast and furious, for stimulants were not lacking either. Today some of them are to be seen with bowed heads, oppressed with the misgiving, that perhaps this kind of riotous worship might not be altogether healthy. While the war was at its height, there was some hope that the orgy of Nationalism might soon be brought to an end. But the war, which disappeared in one aspect came back wearing the mask of peace. The thinkers of the West are bemoaning the tragic fact, that, the infatuation from which this disaster has been caused, is still as vigorous as ever. This infatuation is Nationalism, the collective Egotism of the whole nation. It is a passion whose tendency is against the ideal of Unity. Its pull is towards itself.

The peoples have come together. This great truth cannot be crushed beneath the triumphal car of any imperialistic ambition. Then we must establish relations with this truth. Otherwise there will be no end to these wars of annihilation. Since it is essential that education should fit in with the spirit of the time, the high priests of Nationalism will avail themselves of every pretext and opportunity to inculcate by means of education the doctrine of national pride in the growing generation. When Germany frankly made for Universities the servitors of her political ambitions, other Eurapean nations condemned her. But which of the greater

European nations has not followed suit ? The only difference has been that Germany being the greater master of scientific method, carried on the nationalistic propaganda more throughly. She made her education into a scientific incubator for hatching the eggs of Nationalism, and the chickens produced have been more vigorous than those of the neighbouring nations. The same has become the function of the press,—the unremitting circulation of plausible national untruths.

An Education which can free the nations from this ungodly fetish of Nationalism is what is chiefly needed today. Tomorrow is to begin the chapter of the federation of races. Any evil tendencies of thought and sinful habits, which militate against the spirit of federation will unfit us to take our part in the history of tomorrow. I hope I can claim to be duly conscious of the glories of my own country, but my fervent prayer is that such consciousness may never make me forgetful of the earliest message of our seers, the message of unity, in which the forces of disruption have no place.

I can hear, from over the seas the wailing of men questioning themselves : "Wherein was our sin,--in what part of our thoughts, of our education,—that this terrible suffering is ours today ?" May the reply of our Rishis reach them : "There can be no blindness and sorrow, where all beings are known as oneself and the Unity is realised." I can hear, from over the seas, the cry for Peace. We must give them the message of our great forefathers : "Peace is where the Good is; the Good is where there is Unity."

Shantam, Shivam, Advaitam.

Unity is peace; for Unity is the Good.

I am fully conscious of the glories of my motherland, so it shames me even to think, that now, on the eve of the new age, when the command of Rudra, the Terrible, has gone forth to sweep away the rubbish of decayed ages, this same rubbish should be piled up into an altar for her worship. He who is Peace, who is Good, is the One Universal Refuge of all the different Nations of men. Cannot the chanting of the *mantra, Shantam, Shivam, Advaitam,*—with the first fresh glow of the dawning era, rouse in us once more our ancient love of truth ?

It is the dream of my heart, that the culture-centre of our country should also be the meeting ground of the East and West. In the field of business, antagonism still prevails; it struggles hard

against reconcilement. In the field of culture, there is no such obstacle. The householder, who is exclusively occupied with his domestic concerns and is chary of his hospitality, is poor in spirit. No great country can afford to be confined to its kitchen, it must have its reception room where it can do honour to itself by inviting the world.

India has only government institutions, or their prototypes, for her education. By far the greater part of it consists in begging for the crumbs of other people's attaining. When begging becomes a habit, the lack of hospitality ceases to cause shame. So the Indian Universities have no compunction in proclaiming themselves mendicants with nothing to offer in return for what they receive. It is not true, that nothing is expected from them. I have often been confronted in Europe with the question : "Where is India's voice ?" But when the enquirer from the West comes to India, and listens at her door, he says : "The words which we hear are only the feeble echoes of our own words,—the mere parodies of things preached by us." To me, it has always seemed that, when the Indian disciple of Max Muller boasts in strident tones of his Aryan descent, there is heard all the blatent noise of the Western brass band; and also when in a frenzy of condemnation he rejects the West, there is heard only the most discordant sounds of the Western tunes.

It is my prayer that India should, in the name of all the East, establish a centre for the culture of Truth to which all may be invited. I know the lacks material wealth, but she has no lack of spiritual wisdom. On the strength of the latter she may invite the world, and he invited into every part of the world, not to hang round the threshold, but to take the seat prepared for her in the inmost chamber. But even that homour may be left out of sight. The real object of our endeavour should be to realise truth in our inner nature and then to manifest it in the outer world,—not for the sake of expediency : not for gaining honour, but for emancipating man's spirit from its obscurity. The ideal revelation of soul must be expressed, through all our education and through all our work, and then by honouring all men we shall overselves be honoured, and by welcoming the new age we shall ourselves be freed from the burden of senility. The *manta* of that education is this :

"He, who realises all creatures in himself and himself in all creatures, is never obscured."

5

EAST AND WEST

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

I

It is not always a profound interest in man that carries travellers nowadays to distant lands. More often it is the facility for rapid movement. For lack of time and for the sake of convenience, we generalise and crush human facts flat in the packages inside our steel trunks that hold our traveller's reports.

Our knowledge of our own countrymen, and our feelings about them have slowly and unconsciously grown out of innumerable facts which are full of contradictions and subject to incessant change. They have the elusive mystery and fluidity of life. We cannot define to ourselves what we are as a whole, because we know too much; because our knowledge is more than knowledge. It is an immediate consciousness of personality, any evaluation of which carries some emotion, joy or sorrow, shame or exaltation. But in a foreign land, we try to find our compensation for the meagreness of our data by the compactness of the generalisation which our imperfect sympathy itself helps us to form. When a stranger from the West travels in the Eastern world, he takes the facts that displease him and readily makes use of them for his rigid conclusions, fixed upon the unchallengeable authority of his personal experience. It is like a man, who has his own boat for crossing his village stream, but, on being compelled to wade across some strange watercourse, draws angry

comparisons, as he goes, from every patch of mud and every pebble which his feet encounter.

Our mind has faculties which are universal, but its habits are insular. There are men who become impatient and angry at the least discomfort, when these habits are incommoded. In their idea of the next world, they probably conjure up the ghosts of their slippers and dressing gowns, and expect the latch-key that opens their lodging-house door on earth to fit their door-lock in the other world. As travellers they are failure; for they have grown too accustomed to their mental easy-chairs and in their intellectual nature love home comforts, which are of local make, more than the realities of life, which like earth itself, are full of ups and downs, yet are one in their rounded completeness.

The modern age has brought the geography of the earth near to us, but made it difficult for us to come into touch with man. We go to strange lands and observe; we do not live there. We hardly meet men, but only specimens of knowledge. We are in haste to seek for general types and overlook individuals.

When we fall into the habit of neglecting to use the understanding, that comes of sympathy, in our travels, our knowledge of foreign people grows insensitive, and, therefore, easily becomes both unjust and cruel in its character, and also selfish and contemptuous in its application. Such has, too often, been the case with regarding to the meeting of Western people in our days with others for whom they do not recognise any obligation of kinship.

It has been admitted that the dealings between different races of men are not merely between individuals; that our mutual understanding is either aided, or else obstructed, by the general emanations forming the social atmosphere. These emanations are our collective ideas and collective feelings, generated according to special historical circumstances.

For instance, the caste-idea is a collective in India. When we approach an Indian, who is under the influence of this collective idea, he is no longer a pure individual with his conscience fully awake to the judging of the value of a human being. He is more or less a passive medium for giving expression to the sentiment of a whole community.

It is evident that the caste-idea is not creative; it is merely institutional. It adjusts human beings according to some

mechanical arrangent. It emphasizes the negative side of the individual,—his separateness. It hurts the complete truth in man.

In the West, also, the people have a certain collective idea that obscures their humanity. Let me try to explain what I feel about it.

II

Lately I went to visit some battlefields of France, which had been devastated by war. The awful calm of desolation, which still bore wrinkless of pain, death-struggles stiffened into ugly ridges,—brought before my mind the vision of a huge demon, which had no shape, no meaning, yet had two arms that could strike and break and tear, a gaping mouth that could devour, and bulging brains that could conspire and plans. It was a purpose, which had a living body, but no complete humanity to temper it. Because it was passion,—belonging to life, and yet not having the wholeness of life,—it was the most terrible of life's enemies.

Something of the same sense of oppression in a different degree, and the same desolation in a different aspect, is produced in my mind when I realise the touch of the West upon Eastern life,—the West which, in its relation to us, is all plan and purpose incarnate, without any superfluous humanity.

I feel the contrast very strangly in Japan. In that country, the old world presents itself with some ideal of perfection, in which man has his varied opportunities of self revelation in art, in ceremonial, in religious faith, and in customs expressing the poetry of social relationship. There one feels that deep delight of hospitality, which life offers to life. And side by side, in the same soil, stands the modern world, which is stupendously big and powerful, but in hospitable. It has no simple-heated welcome for man. It is living; yet the incompleteness of life's ideal within it cannot but hurt humanity.

The wriggling tentacles of a cold blooded utilitarianism, with which the West has grasped all the easily yielding succulent portions of the East, are causing pain and indignation throughout the Eastern countries. The West comes to us, not with the imagination and sympathy that create and unite; but with a shock of passion,—passion for power and wealth. This passion is a mere force, which has in it the principle of separation, of conflict.

I have been fortunate in coming into close touch with individual men and women of the Western countries, and have felt with them their sorrows and shared their aspirations. I have known that they seek the same God, who is my God,—even those who deny Him. I feel certain, that, if the great light of culture be extinct in Europe, our horizon in the East will mourn in darkness. It does not hurt my pride to acknowledge, that in the present age, Western humanity has received its mission to be the teacher of the world; that her science, through the mastery of laws of matter, is to liberate human souls from the dark dungeon of matter. For this very reason, I have realised all the more strongly' that the dominant collective idea in the Western countries is not creative. It is ready to enslave or kill individuals, to drug a great people with soul-killing poison, smudging their whole future with the black mist of stupefaction and emasculating entire races of men to the utmost degree of helplessness It is wholly wanting in spiritual power to blend and harmonise; it lacks the sense of the great personality of man.

The most significant fact of modern days in the fact, that the West has met the East. Such a momentous meeting of humanity, in order to be fruitful, must have in its heart some great emotional idea, generous and creative. There can be no doubt that God's choice has fallen upon the knights-errant of the West for the service of the present age; arms and armour have been given to them; but have they yet realised in their hearts the single-minded loyalty to their cause which can resist all temptations of bribery from the devil? The world today is offered to the West. She will destroy it, if she does not use it for a great creation of man. The materials for such a creation are in the hands of science; but the creative genius is in Man's spiritual ideal.

III

When I was young, a stranger from Europe came to Bengal. He chose his lodging among the people of the country, shared with them their frugal diet, and freely offered them his service. He found employment in the houses of the rich, teaching them French and German, and the money thus earned he spent to help poor students in buying books, This meant for him hours of walking

in the midday heat of a tropical summer; for, intent upon exercising utmost economy, he refused to hire conveyances. He was pitiless in his exaction from himself of his resources, in money, time and strength, to the point of privation; and all this for the sake of a people who were obscure, to whom he was not born, but whom he dearly loved. He did not come to us with a professional mission of teaching sectarian creeds; he had not in his nature the least trace of that self-sufficiency of goodness, which humiliates by gifts the victims of its insolent benevolence. Though he did not know our language, he took every occasion to frequent our meetings and ceremonies; yet he was always afraid of intrusion and tenderly anxious lest he might offend us by his ignorance of our customs. At last, under the continual strain of work in an alien climate and surroundings, his health broke down. He died, and was cremated at our burning ground according to his express desire.

The attitude of his mind, the manner of his living, the object of his life, his modesty, his unstinted self-sacrifice for a people who had not even the power to give publicity to any benefaction bestowed upon them, were so utterly unlike anything we were accustomed to associate with the Europeans in India, that it gave rise in our mind to a feeling of love bordering upon awe.

We all have a realm of a private paradise in our mind, where dwell deathless memories of persons who brought some divine light to our life's experience, who may not be known to others and whose names have no place in the pages of history. Let me confess to you that this man lives as one of those immortals in the paradise of my individual life.

He came from Sweden, his name was Hammargren. What was most remarkable in the event of his coming to us in Bengal was the fact that in his own country he had chanced to read some works of my great countryman, Ram Mohan Roy, and felt an immense veneration for his genius and his character. Ram Mohan Roy lived in the beginning of the last century, and it is no exaggeration when I describe him as one of the immortal personalities of modern time. This young Swede had the unusual gift of a far-sighted intellect and sympathy, which enabled him even from his distance of space and time, and in spite of racial differences, to realise the greatness of Ram Mohan Roy. It moved him so deeply that he resolved to go to the country which produced this great man, and offer her his service. He was poor and he had to

wait some time in England before he could earn his passage money to India. There he came at last and in reckless generosity of love utterly spent himself to the last breath of his life, away from home and kindred and all the inheritances of his motherland. His stay among us was too short to produce any outward result. He failed even to achieve during his life what he had in his mind, which was to found by the help of his scanty earnings a library as a memorial to Ram Mohan Roy, and thus to leave behind him a visible symbol of his devotion. But what I prize most in this European youth, who left no record of his life behind him, is not the memory of any service of good will, but the precious gift of respect which he offered to the people who are fallen upon evil times, and whom it is so easy to ignore or to humiliate. For the first time in the modern days, this obscure individual from Sweden brought to our country the chivalrous courtesy of the West, a greeting of human fellowship.

The coincidence came to me with a great and delightful surprise when the Nobel prize was offered to me from Sweden. As a recognition of individual merit, it was of great value to me, no doubt; but it is the acknowledgement of the East as a collaborator with the Western continents, in contributing its riches to the common stock of civilisation, which has an immense significance for the present age. It is the joining hands in comradeship of the two great hemispheres of the human world across the sea.

IV

Today the real East remains unexplored. The blindness of contempt is more hopeless than the blindness of ignorance, for contempt kills the light which ignorance merely leaves unignited. The East is waiting to be understood by the Western races, in order not only to be able to give what is true in her, but also to be confident of her own mission.

In Indian history, the meeting of the Mussalman and the Hindu produced Akbar, the object of whose dream was the unification of hearts and ideals. It had all the glowing enthusiasm of a religion, and it produced an immediate and a vast result even in his own lifetime.

But the fact still remains that the Western mind, after centuries of contact with the East, has not evolved the enthusiasm of a chivalrous ideal which can bring this age to its fulfilment. It is

everywhere raising thorny hedges of exclusion, offering human sacrifices to national self-seeking. It has intensified the mutual feeling of envy among Western races themselves, as they fight over their spoils and display a carnivorous pride in their snarling rows of teeth.

We must again guard our minds from any encroaching distrust of the individuals of a nation. The active love of humanity and the spirit of martyrdom for the cause of justice and truth, which I have met with in the Western countries have been an immense lesson and inspiration to me. I have no doubt in my mind that the West owes its true greatness, not so much to its marvellous traing-ing of intellect, as to its spirit of service devoted to the welfare of man. Therefore, I speak with a personal feeling of pain and sad-ness about the collective power which is guiding the helm of Western civilisation. It is a passion; not an ideal. The more success it has brought to Europe, the more costly it will prove to her at last, when the accounts have to be rendered. And the signs are unmistakable, that the accounts have been called for. The time has come, when Europe must know that the forcible parasitism, which she has been practising upon the two large Continents of the world, the two most unwieldy whales of humanity, --must be causing to her moral nature a gradual atrophy and degeneration.

As an example, let me quote the following extract from the concluding chapter of "From the Cape to Cairo", by Messrs. Grogan and Sharp, who have the power to inculcate their doctrines both by precept and by example. In their reference to the African they are candid, as when they say, "We have stolen his land. Now we must steel his limbs." These two sentences, carefully articu-lated, with a smack of enjoyment, have been more clearly explained in the following statement, where some sense of that decency, which is the attenuated ghost of a buried conscience, prompts the writers to use the phrase, "compulsory labour", in place of the honest word "slavery"; just as the modern politician adroitly avoids the word "possession" and uses the word "mandate". "Compulsory labour in some form," they say, "is the corollary or our occupation of the country." And they add : "It is pathetic, but it is history." —implying thereby, that moral sentiments have no serious effect in the history of human beings.

Elsewhere they wrote : "Either we must give up the country commercially, or we must make the African work. And mere

abuse of those who point out the impasse cannot change the facts. We must decide and soon. Or rather the white man of South Africa will decide." The authors also confess, that they have seen too much of the world "to have any lingering belief that Western Civilisation benefits native races."

The logic is simple,—the logic of egoism. But the argument is simplified by looping off the greater part of the promise. For these writers seem to hold, that the only important question for the white men of South Africa is, how indefinitely to grow fat on ostrich feathers and diamond mines, and dance jazz dances over the misery and degradation of a whole race of fellow beings of a different colour from their own. Possibly they believe, that moral laws have a special domesticated breed of comfortable concessions for the service of the people in power. Possibly they ignore the fact, that commercial and political cannibalism, profitable practised upon foreign races, creeps back nearer home; that the cultivation of unwholesome appetites has its final reckoning with the stomach that has been made to serve it. For, after all, man is a spiritual being, and not a mere living money-bag jumping from profit to profit, and breaking the backbone of human races in its leapfrog of bulging prosperity.

Such, however, has been the condition of things for more than a century; and today, trying to read the future by the light of the European conflagration, we are asking ourselves everywhere in the East : "Is this frightfully overgrown power really great ? It can bruise us from without; but can it add to our wealth of spirit ? It can sign peace treaties; but can it give peace ?"

It was about two thousand years ago that all-powerful Rome in one of its eastern provinces executed on a cross a simple teacher of an obscure tribe of fishermen. On that day, the Roman governor felt no falling off of his appetite or sleep. On that day, there was, on the one hand, the agony, the humiliation, the death; on the other, the pomp of pride and festivity in the Governor's palace.

And today ? To whom, then, shall we bow the head ?

Kasmai devaya havisha vidhema ?

"To which God shall we offer oblation ?"

We know of an instance in our own history of India, when a great personality both in his life and voice, struck the keynote of

the solemen music of the soul, love for all creatures. And that music crossed seas, mountains and deserts. Races belonging to different climates, habits and languages were drawn together, not in the clash of arms, not in the conflict of exploitation, but in harmony of life, in amity and peace. That was creation.

When we think of it, we see at once what the confussion of thought was, to which the Western poet, dwelling upon the difference between East and West, referred, when he said, "Never the twain shall meet." It is true, that they are not yet showing any real sign of meeting. But the reason is, because the West has not sent out its humanity to meet the man in the East, but only its machine. Therefore, the poet's line has to be changed into something like this,

Man is man, machine is machine,
And never the twain shall wed.

You must know that red tape can never be a common human bond, that official sealing wax can never provide means of mutual attachment; that it is a painful ordeal for human beings to have to receive favours from animated pigeon-holes, and condescensions from printed circulars that give notice, but never speak. The presence of the Western people in the East is a human fact. If we are to gain anything from them, it must not be a mere sum-total of legal codes and systems of civil and military services. Man is a great deal more to man than that. We have our human birthright to claim direct help from the man of the West, if he has anything great to give us. It must come to us, not through mere facts in a juxtaposition, but through the spontaneous sacrifice made by those who have the gift and, therefore, the responsibility.

Earnestly I ask the poet of the Western world to realize and sing to you with all the great power of music which he has, that the East and the West are ever in search of each other, and that they must meet not merely in the fullness of physical strength, but in fullness of truth; that the right hand, which wields the sword, has the need of the left, which holds the shield of safety.

The East has its seat in the vast plains watched over by the snow-peaked mountains and fertilized by rivers carrying mighty volumes of water to the sea. There, under the blaze of a tropical sun, the physical life has bedimmed the light of its vigor, and lessened its claims. There man has had the repose of mind, which

has ever tried to set itself in harmoney with the inner notes of existence. In the silence of sunrise and sunset, and no star-crowed nights, he has sat face to face with the infinite, waiting for the revelation that opens up the heart of all that there is. He has said, in a rapture of realisation.

"Hearken to me, ye children of the Immortal, who dwell in the kingdom of heaven. I have known, from beyond darkness, the Supreme Person, shinning with the radiance of the sun."

The man from the East, with his faith in the eternal, who in his soul has met the touch of the Supreme Person,—has he never come to you in the West and spoken to you of the Kingdom of Heaven? Did he not unite the East and the West in truth, in the unity of one spiritual bond between all children of the Immortal, in the realization of one great Personality in all human persons?

Yes, the East did meet the West profoundly in the growth of her life. Such union become possible, because the East came to the West with the ideal that is creative, and not with the passion that destroys moral bonds. The mystic consciousness of the infinite, which she brought with her, was greatly needed by the man of the West to give him his balance.

On the other hand, the East must find her own balance in Science,—the magnificent gift that the West can bring to her. Truth has its nest as well as its sky. That nest is definite in structure, accurate in law of construction; and though it has to be changed and rebuilt over and over again, the need of it is never-ending and its laws are eternal. For some centuries the East has neglected the nest building of truth. She has not been attentive to learn its secret. Trying to cross the trackless infinite, the East has relied solely upon her wings. She has spurned the earth, till, buffeted by storms her wings are hurt and she is tired, sorely needing help. But need she then be told, that the messenger of the sky and the builder of the nest shall never meet?

the shore opposite may be one, its landing places are many and diversely situate.

Our Shastras tell us that the divine *shakti* is many-sided, so that a host of different factors operate in the work of creation. In death these merge into sameness; for chaos alone is uniform. God has given to man the same many-sided *shakti*, for which reason the civilizations of his creation have their divine wealth of diversity. It is God's purpose that in the societies of man the various should be strung together into a garland of unity; while often the mortal providence of our public life, greedy for particular results, seeks to knead them all into a lump of uniformity. That is why we see in the concerns of this world so many identically liveried machine-made workers, so many marionettes pulled by the same string; and on the other hand, wherever human spirit has not been reduced to the coldness of collapse, we also see perpetual rebelliousness against this mechanical mortar-pounded homogeneity.

If in any country we find no symptom of such rebellion, if we find its people submissively or contentedly prone on the dust, in dumb terror of some master's bludgeon, or blind acceptance of some *guru's* injunction, then indeed should we know that for such a country, *in extremis*, it is high time to mourn.

In our country this ominous process of being levelled down into sameness has long been at work. Every individual of every caste has his function assigned to him, together with the obsession into which he has been hypnotized, that, since he is bound by some divine mandate, accepted by his first ancestor, it would be sinful for him to seek relief therefrom. This imitation of the social scheme of anti-life makes very easy the performance of petty routine duties, but specially difficult the attainment of manhood's estate. It imparts skill to the limbs of the man who is a bondsman. whose labour is drudgery; but it kills the mind of a man who is a doer, whose work is creation. So in India, during long ages past, we have the spectacle of only a repetition of that which has gone before.

In the process of this continuous grind India has acquired a distate for very existence. In dread of the perpetuation of this same grind, through the eternal repetition of births, she is ready to intern all mental faculties in absolute inaction in order to cut at the root of *Karma* itself. For only too well has she realized,

in the dreary round of her daily habit, the terribleness of this everlasting recapitulation. Moreover, this dreariness is not the only loss sustained by those who have suffered themselves to be reduced to a machine-like existence; for they have also all power to combat aggression or exploitation. From age to age they have been assaulted by the strong, defrauded by the cunning and deluded by the *gurus* to whom their conscience was surrendered. Such a state of abject passivity has become easy because of the teaching that through an immutable decree of Providence they have been set adrift on the sea of Time, upon the raft of a monotonous living death, burdened with a vocation that makes no allowance for variation in human nature.

But whatever our Shastras may or may not have said, this popular conception of the Creator's doing is the very opposite of what He really did do to man at the moment of his creation. Instead of furnishing him with an automatically revolving grindstone, God slipped into his constitution that most lively sprightly thing called Mind. And unless man can be made to get rid of this mind, it will remain impossible to convert him into a machine. In so far as the man at the top succeeded in paralyzing the people's minds by fear, or greed for hypnotic texts, they succeeded in extorting, from one class of them, only textiles from their looms; from another class, only posts from their wheels; from a third, only oil from their mills. Now when from such persons as these, it becomes necessary to demand the application of their mind to any big work on hand, the stand aghast. "Mind !" cry they. "What on earth is that ? Why don't you order us what to do and give some text for us to repeat from mouth to mouth and age to age ?"

Our mind, in doing duty only as a hedge to prevent the encroachment of living ideas, had been kept evenly clipped short for the purpose. If, in spite of that, in this age of self-assertion, we find mischievous branches trying to make room for the disturbance of the spruceness of the trimming, -if all over minds refuse incessantly to reverberate some one set *mantram*, in the droning chirp of the cicadas of the night, --let no one be annoyed or alarmed; for only because of this does the attainment of Swaraj become thinkable !

That is why I am not ashamed,--though there is every reason to be afraid,—to admit that the depths of my mind have not been

moved by the Charkha agitation. This may be [illegible] by many as sheer presumption on my part. They may even wax abusive; for swearing is a much needed relief for the [illegible] when even one stray fish happens to elude the all-embracing net. Still I cannot help hoping that there are others who are in the same plight as myself,—though it is difficult to find them all out. For even where hands are reluctant to work the spindle, mouths are all the more busy spinning its praises.

I am strongly of opinion that all intense pressure of persuasion brought upon the crowd psychology is unhealthy for it. Some strong and wide-spread intoxication of belief among a vast number of men can suddenly produce a convenient unity [illegible] of purpose immense and powerful. It seems for the moment a miracle of a wholesale conversion; and a catastrophic phenomenon of this nature stuns our rational mind, raising high [illegible] hope of easy realization which is very much like boom in the [illegible] market. The amazingly immediate success is no criterion of its reality, the very dimension of its triumph having a dangerous effect of producing sudden and universal eclipse of our [illegible] Human nature has its elasticity; and in the name of [illegible], it can be forced towards a particular direction far beyond [illegible] normal and wholesome limits. But the rebound is sure to [illegible], and the consequent disillusionment will leave behind it a [illegible] track of demoralization. We have had our experience [illegible] in the tremendous exultation lately produced by the [illegible] easy prospect of Hindu-Muslim unity. And, therefore, I [illegible] of a blind faith on a very large scale in the Charkha [illegible] country which is so liable to succumb to the lure of [illegible] when pointed out by a personality about whose moral [illegible] they can have no doubt.

Anyhow, what I say is this. If, today, [illegible] come upon our country, we should know that the [illegible] complexly ramified and it dwells within ourselves. [illegible] whole country to fall upon only one of its external [illegible] the application of one and the same remedy, will not [illegible] the demon away. If man had been a mindless [illegible], a defect in his features might have been cured [illegible] and chisel; but when his shrunken features bespeak [illegible] the cure must be constitutional, not formal; and [illegible] hammer strokes upon some one particular external point w[illegible] damage

intellect, which is the master, and not merely its commands for our muscles, which are slaves. In this clerk-mechanical ridden country, for instance, we all know that the routine of clearkship is not mentally stimulating. By doing the same thing day after day, mechanical skill may be acquired; but the mind, like a mill-turning bullock, will be kept going round and round a narrow range of habit. That is why, in every country man has looked down on work which involves this kind of mechanical repetition. Carlyle may have proclaimed the dignity of labour in his stentorian accents, but a still louder cry has gone up from humanity, age after age, testifying to its indignity. "The wise man sacrifices the half to avert a total loss", so says our Sanskrit proverb. Rather than die of starvation, one can understand a man preferring to allow his mind to be killed. But it would be a cruel joke to try to console him by talking of the dignity of such sacrifice.

In fact, humanity has ever been beset with the grave problem, how to rescue the large majority of machines. It is my belief that all the civilizations, which have ceased to be, have come by their death when the mind of the majority got killed under some pressure by the minority; for the truest wealth of man is mind. No amount of respect outwardly accorded, can save man from the inherent ingloriousness of labour, divorced from mind. Only those who feel that they have become inwardly small can be belittled by others, and the numbers of the higher castes have ever dominanted over those of the lower, not because they have any accidental advantage of power, but because the latter are themselves humbly conscious of their dwarfed humanity. If the cultivation of science by Europe has any moral significance, it is in its rescue of man from outrage by nature,—not its use of man as a machine, but its use of the machine to harness the forces of nature in man's service. One thing is certain, that the all-embracing poverty which has overwhelmed our country cannot be removed by working with our hands to the neglect of science. Nothing can be more undignified drudgery than that man's *knowing* should stop dead and his *doing* go on for ever.

It was a great day for man when he discovered the wheel. The facility of motion thus given to inert matter enabled it to bear much of man's burden. This was but right, for Matter is the true Shudra; while with his dual existence in body and mind, Man

is a Dwija. Man has to maintain both his inner and outer life. Whatever functions he cannot perform by material means, are left as an additional burden on himself, bringing him to this extent down to the level of matter, and making him a Shudra. Such Shudras cannot obtain glory by being merely glorified in words.

Thus, whether in the shape of the spinning wheel, or the potter's wheel or the wheel of a vehicle, the wheel has rescued innumerable men from the Shudra's estate and lightened their burdens. No wealth is greater than this lightening of man's material burdens. This fact man has realized ever more and more, since the time when he turned his first wheel: for his wealth has thereupon gone on compounding itself in ever-increasing rotation, refusing to be confined to the limited advantage of the original Charkha.

Is there no permanent truth underlying these facts ? One aspect of Vishnu's *shakti* is the Padma, the beautiful lotus; another is the Chakra, the movable discus. The one is the complete ideal of perfection, the other is the process of movement, the ever-active power seeking fulfilment. When man attained touch with this moving *shakti* of Vishnu, he was liberated from that inertia which is the origin of all poverty. All divine power is infinite. Man has not yet come to the end of the power of the revolving wheel. So, if we are taught that in the pristine Charkha we have exhausted all the means of spinning thread, we shall not gain the full favour of Vishnu. Neither will his spouse Lakshmi smile on us. When we forget that science is spreading the domain of Vishnu's Chakra, those who have honoured the Discus-bearer to better purpose will spread their dominion over us. If we are wilfully blind to the grand vision of whirling forces, which science has revealed, the Charka will cease to have any message for us. The hum of the spinning wheel which, once carried us so long a distance on the path of wealth, will no longer talk to us of progress.

Some have protested that they ever preached that only the turning of the Charkha should be engaged in. But they have not spoken of any other necessary work. Only one means of attaining Swaraj has been definitely ordered and the rest is a vast silence. Does not such silence amount to a speech stronger than any uttered word ? Is not the Charkha thrust out against the background of this silence into undue prominence ? Is it really so big

as all that ? Has it really the divinity which may enable it to appropriate the singleminded devotion of all the millions of India, despite their diversity of temperament and talent ? Repeated efforts, even unto violence and bloodshed, have been made, all the world over, to bring mankind together on the basis of the common worship of a common Deity. But even these have not been successful. Neither has a common God been found, nor a common from of worship. Can it then be expected, that, in the shrine of Swaraj, the Charkha goddess will attract to herself alone the offerings of every devotee ? Surely such expectation amounts to a distrust of human nature, a disrespect for India's people.

In my childhood, I had an up-country servant, called Gopee, who used to tell us how once he went to Puri on a pilgrimage, and was at a loss what fruit to offer to Jagannath, since any fruit so offered could not be eaten by him any more. After repeatedly going over the list of edible fruits known to him, he suddenly bethought himself of the tomato (which had very little fascination for him), and the tomato it was which he offered, never having reason to repent of such clear abnegation. But to call upon man to make the easiest of offerings to the smallest of of gods is the greatest of insults to his manhood. To ask all the millions of our people to spin the Charkha is as bad as offering the tomato to Jagannath. I do hope and trust that there are not thirty-three crores of Gopees in India. When man receives the call of the great to make some sacrifice, he in indeed exalted; for then he comes to himself with a start of revelation,—to find that he too has been bearing his hidden resource of greatness.

Our country is the land of rites and ceremonials, so that we have more faith in worshipping the feet of the priest than the Divinity whom he serves. We cannot get rid of the conviction that we can safely cheat our innerself of its claims, if we can but bribe some outside agency. This reliance on outward help is a symptom of slavishness, for no habit can more easily destroy all reliance on self. Only to such a country can come the Charkha as the emblem of her deliverance; and the people, dazed into obedience by some specious temptation, go on turning their Charkha in the seclusion of their corners, dreaming all the while that the car of Swaraj of itself rolls onward in triumphal progress at every turn of their wheel.

And so it becomes necessary to restate afresh the old truth

that the foundation of Swaraj cannot be based on any external conformity, but only on the internal union of hearts. If a great union is to be achieved, its field must be great likewise. But if, out of the whole field of economic endeavour, only one fractional portion be selected for special concentration thereon, then when we may get home-spun thread, and even genuine Khaddar, but we shall not have united, in the pursuit of one great camplete purpose, the lives of our countrymen.

In India, it not possible for every one to unite in the realm of religion. The attempt to unite on the political platform is of recent growth, and will yet take long to permeate the masses. So that the religion of economics is where we should above all try to bring about this union of ours. It is certainly the largest field available to us; for here high and low, learned and ignorant, all have their scope. If this field cease to be one of warfare, if there we can prove that not competition, but co-operation is the real truth, then indeed we can reclaim from the hands of the evil one, an immense territory for the reign of peace and goodwill. It is important to remember, moreover, that this is the ground whereon our village communities had actually practised unity in the past. What if the threat of the old union has snapped? It may again be jointed together; for such former practice has left in our character the potentiality of its renewal.

As the livelihood for the individual, so is politics for a particular people,—a field for the exercise of their business instincts of patriotism. All this time, just as business has implied antagonism so has politics been concerned with the self-interest of a pugnacious nationalism. The forgoing of arms and of false documents has been its main activity. The burden of competitive armaments has been increasing apace, with no end to it in sight, no peace for the world in prospect.

When it becomes clear to man that in the co-operation of nations lies the true interest of each,--for man is established in mutuality—then only can politics become a field for true endeavour. Then will the same means which the individual recognized as moral and, therefore, true, be also recognized as such by the nations. They will know that cheating, robbery and the exclusive pursuit of self-aggrandizement are as harmful for the purposes of this world as they are deemed to be for those of the next. It may be that the League of Nations will prove to be the first step in the process of

this realization.

Again just as the present-day politics is a manifestation of extreme individualism in nations, so is the process of gaining a livelihood an expression of the extreme selfishness of individuals. That is why man has descended to such depths of deceit and cruelty in his indiscriminate cometition. And yet, since man is man, even in his business he ought to have cultivated his humanity rather than the powers of exploitation. In working for his livelihood he ought to have earned not only his daily bread, but also his eternal truth.

When, years ago, I first became acquainted with the principles of co-operation in the field of business, one of the knots of a tangled problem which had long perplexed my mind seemed to have been unravelled. I felt that the separateness of self-interest, which had so long contemptuously ignored the claims of the truth of man, was at length to be replaced by a combination of common interest which would help to uphold that truth, proclaiming that poverty lay in the separation, and wealth in the union of man and man. For myself I had never believd that this original truth of man could find its limit in any region of his activity.

The co-operative principle tells us, in the field of man's livelihood, that only when he arrives at his truth, can he get rid of his poverty,—not by any external means. And the manhood of man is at length honoured by the enunciation of this principle. Co-operations is an ideal, not a mere system and, therefore, it can give rise to innumerable methods of its application. It leads us into no blind ally; for at every step it communes with our spirit. And so, it seemed to me, in its wake would come, not merely food, but the goddess of plenty herself, in whom all kinds of material food are established in an essential moral oneness.

It was while some of us were thinking of the ways and means of adopting this principle in our institution that I came across the book called *The National Being* written by that Irish idealist, A.E., who has a rare combination in himself of poetry and practical wisdom. There I could see a great concrete realization of the co-operative living of my dreams. It became vividly clear to me what varied results could flow therefrom, how full the life of man could be made thereby. I could understand how great the concrete truth was in any plan of life, the truth that in separation is bondage, in union is liberation. It has been said in the

Upanishads that Brahma is reason, Brahma is spirit, but *Anna* also is *Brahma*, which means that Food also represents an eternal truth, and, therefore, through it we may arrive at a great relization, if we travel along the true path.

I know there will be many to tax me with indicating a solution of greet difficulty. To give concreat shape to the ideal of co-operation on so vast a scale will involve endless toil in experiment and failure, before at length it may become an accomplished fact. No doubt it is difficult. Nothing great can be got cheap. We only cheat ourselves when we try to acquire things that are precious with a price that is inadequate. The problem of our poverty being complex, with its origin in our ignorance and unwisdom, in the inaptitude of our habits, the weakness of our character, it can only be effectively attacked by taking in hand our life as a whole and finding both internal and external remedies for the malady which afflicts it. How can there be an easy solution ?

There are many who assert and some who believe that Swaraj can be attained by the Charkha. But I have yet to meet a person who has a clear idea of the process. That is why there is no discussion, but only quarrelling over the question If I state that it is not possible to repel foreign invaders armed with guns and cannons by the indigenous bow and arrow, there will, I suppose, be still some to contradict me asking, 'Why not ?' It has already been said by some, "Would not the foreigners be drowned, even if every one of our three hundred and thirty millions were only to spit at them ?" While not denying the fearsomeness of such a flood, or the efficacy of such a suggestion, for throwing odium on foreign millitary science, the difficulty, which my mind feels to be insuperable, is that you can never get all these millions even to spit in unison. It is too simple for human beings. The same difficulty applies to the Charkha solution.

The disappointments, the failures, the recommencements that Sir Horace Plunkett had to face when he set to work to apply the co-operative principle in the economic reconstruction of Ireland, are a matter of history. But though it takes time to start a fire, once alight it spreads rapidly. That is the way with truth as well. In whatever corner of the earth it may take root, the range of its seeds is world-wide, and everywhere they may find soil for growth and give of their fruit to each locality. Sir Horace Plunkett's success was not confined to Ireland alone; he achieved also the

possibility of success for India. If any true devotee of our motherland should be able to eradicate the poverty of only one of her villages, he will have given permanent wealth to the thirty-three crores of his countrymen. Those who are wont to measure truth by its size get only an outside view, and fail to realize that each seed, in its tiny vital spark, brings divine authority to conquer the whole world.

As I am writing this, a friend objects that even through I may be right in thinking that the Charkha is not competent to bring us Swaraj, or remove the whole of our poverty, why ignore such virtues as it admittedly possesses ? Every farmer, every householder, has a great deal of leisure left over after his ordinary work is done; so that if everyone would utilize such spare time in productive work much could be done towards the alleviation of our poverty. Why not glorify the Charkha as one of the instruments of such a desirable consummation ? This reminds me of a similar proposition I have heard before. Most of our people throw away the water in which their rice is boiled. If everyone conserved this nutritious fluid that would go a longer way to solve the food problem. I admit there is truth in this contention. The slight change of taste, required for eating boiled rice with its water retained, should not be very difficult to acquire, in view of the object sought to be gained. Many other similar savings could be effected which are doubtless worth the effort and should be looked upon as a duty. But has any one ever suggested that the conservation of rice-water should be made a plank in the platform of Swaraj work ? And is there no good reason for the commission ?

In order to make my point clear let me take an instance from the case of religion, If a preacher should repeatedly and insistently urge that the drinking of water from any and every well is the cause of the degeneracy of our religion, then the chief objection to his teaching would be its tendency to debase the value of moral action as a factor in religion. No doubt there is the chance of some well or other containing impure water; impure water destroys health; a diseased body begets a diseased mind; and, therefore, spiritual welfare is in danger. I am not concerned to dispute the truth in all this, yet I must repeat that to give undue value to the comparatively unimportant, lowers the value of the important. And so we find that there are number of Hindus who would not hesitate even to kill a Mohammedan if he came

to draw water from their own well. That is how the injunction: "Thou shalt not drink dubious water", gets the better of the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill". There is no end to the perversions of value which have thus weakened our minds, and it is only because we have become habituated to their facile intrusion that no one is surprised to see the Charkha stalk the land, with uplifted club, in the garb of Swaraj itself. The Charkha is doing harm because of the undue prominence which it has thus usurped, whereby is only adds fuel to the smouldering weakness that is eating into our vitals. Suppose some mighty voice should next proclaim that the rice-water must not be suffered to enter our councils. Given requisite forcefulness, that may lead to the flow of rice-water being followed by the flow of human blood, in the sacred name of political purity. If the idea of the impurity of foreign textiles effect a lodgement in our mind along with the numerous fixed ideas already there, in regard to the impurity of certain foods and waters, the riots. to which we are accustomed, might pale before the sanguinary strife that may eventually be get ablaze between the so-called unclean lot who may use foreign cloth and those politically pure souls who do not. The danger to my mind is that the contagion of "untouchability", which was hitherto confined to our society, may extend to the economic and political spheres as well.

Some one whispers to me that to combine in Charkha spinning is co-operation itself. I beg to disagree. If all the higher caste people of the Hindu community combine in keeping their well-water undefilled from use of the lower ones, this practice in itself does not give it the dignity of bacteriology. It is a particular action isolated from the comprehensive vision of this science. And, therefore, while we keep our wells reserved for the cleaner sect, we allow our ponds to get polluted, to ditches round our houses to harbour messengers of death. Those who intimately know Bengal also know that at the time of preparing a special kind of pickle our women take extra precaution in keeping themselves clean. In fact they go through a kind of ceremonial of ablution and other forms of purifications. For such extra care their pickle survives the ravage of time, while their villages are devastated by epidemics. For while there may remain some Pasteur's law invisible at the depth of this pickle-making precaution, the diseased sleeps in the neighbourhood make themselves

only too evident by their magnitude. The universal application of Pasteur's law in the production of pickle has some similarity to the application of the principle of a co-operation method of livelihood in turning the spinning wheel. It may produce enormous quantity of yarn, but the blind suppression of intellect which guards our poverty in its dark dungeon will remain inviolate. This narrow activity will shed light only upon one detached piece of fact, keeping its greal background of truth densely dark.

It is extremely distasteful to me to have to differ from Mahatma Gandhi in regard to any matter of principle or method. Not that, from a higher standpoint, there is anything wrong in so doing; but my heart shrinks from it. For what could be a greater joy than to join hands in the fields of work with one for whom one has such love and reverence ? Nothing is more wonderful to me than Mahatmaji's great moral personality. In him divine providence has given us a burning thunderbolt of *shakti*. May this *shakti* give power to India, - not overwhelm her—that is my prayer ! The difference in our standpoints and temperaments has made the Mahatma look upon Rammohan Roy as pigmy, while I revere him as a giant. The main difference makes the Mahatma's field of work one which my conscience cannot accept as its own. That is a regret which will abide with me always. It is, however, God's will that man's paths of endeavour shall be various, else why these differences of mentality ? How often have may personal feelings of regard strongly urged me to accept at Mahatma Gandhi's hands my enlistment as a follower of the Charkha cult, but as often have my reason and conscience restrained me, lest I should be a party to the raising of the Charkha to a higher place than is its due, thereby distracting attention from other more important factors in our task of all-round reconstruction. I feel sure that Mahatmaji himself will not fail to understand me, and keep for me the same forberance which he has always had. Acharya Ray, I also believe, has respect for independence of opinion, even when unpopular; so that, although when carried away by the fervour of his own propaganda he may now and then give me a scolding, I doubt not he retains for me a soft corner in his heart. As for my countrymen, the public—accustomed as they are to drown, under the facile flow of their minds both past services and past

disservices done to them,—if today they cannot find it in their hearts to forgive, they will forget tomorrow. Even if they do not,—if for me their displeasure is fated to be permanent, then just as today I have Acharya Seal as my fellow culprit, so tomorrow I may find at my side persons rejected by their own country whose radiance reveals the black unreality of any stigma of popular disapprobation.

7

THE CALL OF TRUTH*

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Parasites have to pay for their ready-made victuals by losing the power of assimilating food in natural form. In the history of man this same sin of laziness has always entailed degeneracy. Man becomes parasitical, not only when he fattens on others' toil, but also when he becomes rooted to a particular set of outside conditions and allows himself helplessly to drift along the stream of things as they are; for the outside is alien to the inner self, and if the former be made indispensable by sheer habit, man acquires parasitical characteristics, and becomes unable to perform his true function of converting the impossible into the possible.

In this sense all the lower animals are parasites. They are carried along by their environment; they live or die by natural selection; they progress or retrogress as nature may dictate. Their mind has lost the power of growth. The bees, for millions of years, have been unable to get beyond the pattern of their hive. For that reason, the form of their cell has attained a certain perfection, but their mentality is confined to the age-long habits of their hive-life and cannot soar out of its limitations. Nature has developed a cautious timidity in the case of her lower types of life; she keeps them tied to her apron strings and has stunted their minds, lest they should stray into dangerous experiments.

But Providence displayed a sudden accession of creative

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courage when it came to man; for his inner nature has not been tied down, though outwardly the poor human creature has been left naked, weak and defenceless. In spite of these disabilities, man in the joy of his inward freedom has stood up and declared : "I shall achieve the impossible." That is to say, he has consistently refused to submit to the rule of things as they always have been, but is determined to bring about happenings that have never been before. So when, in the beginning of his history, man's lot was thrown in with monstrous creatures, tusked and taloned, he did not, like the deer, simply take refuge in flight, nor, like the tortoise, take refuge in hiding but set to work with flints to make even more efficient weapons. These, moreover, being the creation of his own inner faculties, were not dependent on natural selection, as were those of the other animals, for their development. And so man's instruments progressed from flint to steel. This shows that man's mind has never been helplessly attached to his environment. What came to his hand was brought under his thumb. Not content with the flint on, the surface, he delved for the iron beneath. Not satisfied with the easier process of cripping flints, he proceeded to melt iron ore and hammer it into shape. That which resisted more stubbornly was converted into a better ally. Man's inner nature not only finds success in its activity. but there it also has its joy. He insists on penetrating further and further into the depths, from the obvious to the hidden, from the easy to the difficult, from parasitism to self-determination, from the slavery of his passions to the mastery of himself. That is how he has won.

But if any section of mankind should say, "The flint was the weapon of our revered forefathers: by departing from it we destroy the spirit of the race," then they may succeed in preserving what they call their race, but they strike at the root of the glorious tradition of humanity which was their also. And we find that those, who have steadfastly stuck to their flints, may indeed have kept safe their pristine purity to their own satisfaction. but they have been outcasted by the rest of mankind, and so have to pass their lives slinking away in jungle and cave. They are, as I say, reduced to a parasitic dependence on outside nature, driven along blindfold by the force of things as they are. They have not achieved Swaraj in their inner nature, and so are deprived of Swaraj in the outside world as well. They have ceased to be even

aware, that it is man's true function to make the impossible into the possible by dint of his own powers; that it is not for him to be confined merely to what has happened before; that he must progress towards what ought to be by rousing all his inner powers by means of the force of his soul.

Thirty years age I used to edit *The Sadhana* magazine and there I tried to say this same thing. Then English educated India was frightfully busy begging for its rights. And I repeatedly endeavoured to impress on my countrymen, that man is not under any necessity to beg for rights from others but must create them for himself; because man lived mainly by his inner nature, and there he is the master. By dependence on acquisition from the outside, man's inner nature suffers loss. And it was my contention, that man is not so hard oppressed by being deprived of his outward rights as he is by the constant bearing of the burden of prayers and petitions.

Then when *The Bangadarshan* magazine came into my hands, Bengal was beside herself at the sound of the sharpening of the knife for her partition. The boycott of Manchester, which was the outcome of her distress, had raised the profits of the Bombay mill-owners to a super-foreign degree. And I had then to say: "This will not do, either; for it is also of the outside. Your main motive is hatred of the foreigner, not love of country. It was then reaily necessary for our countrymen to be made conscious of the distinction, that the Englishman's presence is an external accident,—mere *maya*—but that the presence of our country is an internal fact which is also an eternal truth. *Maya* looms with an exaggerated importance, only when we fix our attention exclusively upon it, by reason of some infatuation—be it of love, or of hate. Whether in our passion we rush to embrace it, or attack it; whether we yearn for it, or spurn it; it equally fills the whole field of our blood-shot vision.

Maya is like the darkness. No steed, however swift, can carry us beyond it; no amount of water can wash it away. Truth is like a lamp; even as it is lit, *maya* vanishes. Our Shashtras tell us that Truth, even when it is small, can rescue us from the terror which is great. Fear is the atheism of the heart. It cannot be overcome from the side of negation. If one of its heads be struck off, it breeds, like the monster of the fable, a hundred others. Truth is positive; it is the affirmation of the soul. If even

a little of it be roused, it attacks negation at the very heart and over-powers it wholly.

Alien Government in India is a varitable chameleon. Today it comes in the guise of the Englishman; tomorrow perhaps as some other foreigner; the next day, without abating a joy of its virulence, it may take the shape of our own countrymen. However determinedly we may try to hunt this monster of foreign dependence with outside lethal weapons, it will always elude our pursuit by changing its skin, or its colour. But if we can gain within us the truth called our country, all outward *maya* will vanish of itself. The declaration of faith that my country *is* there, to be realized, has to be attained by each one of us. The idea that our country is ours, merely because we have been born in it, can only be held by those who are fastened, in a parasitic existence, upon the outside world. But the true nature of man is his inner nature, with its inherent powers. Therefore that only can be a man's true country, which he can help to create by his wisdom and will, his love and his actions. So in 1905, I called upon my countrymen to create their country by putting forth their own powers from within. For the act of creation itself is the realization of truth.

The Creater gains Himself in His universe. To gain one's own country means to realize one's own soul more fully expanded within it. This can only be done when we are engaged in building it up with our service, our ideas and our activities. Man's country being the creation of his own inner nature, when his soul thus, expands within it, it is more truly expressed, more fully realized. In my paper called *Swadeshi Samaj*, written in 1905, I discussed at length the ways and means by which we could make the country of our birth more fully our own. Whatever may have been the short-comings of my words then uttered. I did not fail to lay emphasis on the truth, that we must win our country, not from some foreigner, but from our own inertia, our own indifference. Whatever be the nature of the boons we may be seeking for our country at the door of the foreign Government, the result is always the same,—it only makes our inertia more densely inert. Any public benefit done by the alien Government goes to their credit, not to ours. So whatever outside advantage such public benefit might mean for us, our country will only get more and more completely lost to us thereby. That is to say, we shall have to

pay out in soul value for what we purchase as material advantage. The Rishi has said: 'The son is dear, not because we desire a son, but because we desire to realize our own soul in him.' It is the same with our country. It is dear to us, because it is the expression of our own soul. When we realize this, it will become impossible for us to allow our service of our country to wait on the pleasure of others.

These truths, which I then tried to press on my countrymen, were not particularly new, nor was there anything therein which need have grated on their ears; but, whether anyone else remembers it or not, I at least am not likely to forget the storm of indignation which I roused. I am not merely referring to the hooligans of journalism whom it pays to be scurrilous. But even men of credit and courtesy were unable to speak of me in restrained language.

There were two root causes of this. One was anger, the second was greed.

Giving free vent to angry feelings is a species of a self-indulgence. In those days there was practically nothing to stand in the way of the spirit of destructive revel, which spread all over the country. We went about picketing, burning, placing thorns in the path of those whose way was not ours, acknowledging no restraints in language or behaviour,—all in the frenzy of our wrath. Shortly after, it was all over, a Japanese friend asked me; "How is it you people cannot carry on your work with calm and deep determination? This wasting of energy can hardly be of assistance to your object." I had no help but to reply: "When we have the gaining of the object clearly before our minds, we can be restrained, and concentrate our energies to serve it; but when it is a case of venting our anger, our excitement rises and rises till it drowns the object, and then we are spendthrift to the point of bankruptcy." However that may be, there were my countrymen encountering, for the time being, no check to the overflow of their outraged feelings. It was like a strange dream. Everything seemed possible. Then all of a sudden it was my misfortune to appear on the scene with my doubts and my attempts to divert the current into the path of self-determination. My only success was in diverting their wrath on to my own devoted head.

Then there was our greed. In history, all people have won

valuable things by pursuing difficult paths. We had hit upon the device of getling them cheap, not even through the painful indignity of supplication with folded hands, but by proudly conducting our beggary in threatening tones. The country was in ecstasy at the ingenuity of the trick. It left like being at a reduced price sale. Everything worth having in the political market was ticketed at half-price. Shabby-genteel mentality is so taken up with low prices that it has no attention to spare for quality, and feels inclined to attack anybody who has the hardihood to express doubts in that regard. It is like the man of worldly piety who believes that the judicious expenditure of coin can secure, by favour of the priest, a direct passage to heaven. The dare-devil who ventures so suggest that not heaven but dreamland is likely to be his destination, must beware of a violent end.

Anyhow, it was the outside *maya* which was our dream and our ideal in those days. It was a favourite phrase of one of the leaders of the same that we must keep one hand at the feet and the other at the throat of the Englishman,—that is to say, with no hand left free for the country! We have since perhaps got rid of this ambiguous attitude. Now we have one party that has both hands raised to the foreigners throat, and another party which has both hands down at his feet; but whichever attitude it may be, these methods still appertain to the outside *maya*. Our unfortunate minds keep revolving round and round the British Government, now to the left, now to the right; our affirmations and denials alike are concerned with the foreigner.

In those days, tne stimulus from every side was directed towards the heart of Bengal. But emotion by itself, like fire, only consumes its fuel and reduces it to ashes; it has no creative power The intellect of man must busy itself, with patience, with skill, with foresight, in using this fire to melt that which is hard and difficult into the object of its desire. We neglected to rouse our intellectual forces, and so were unable to make use of this surging emotion of ours to create any organization of permanent value. The reason of our failure, therefore, was not in anything outside, but rather within us. For a long time past we have been in the habit, in our life and endeavour, of setting apart once place for our emotions and another for our practices. Our intellect has all the time remained dormant, because we have not dared to allow

it scope. That is why, when we have to rouse ourselves to action, it is our emotion which has to be requisitioned, and our intellect has to be kept from interfering by the hypnotism of some magical formula,—that is to say we hasten to create a situation absolutely inimical to the free play of our intellect.

The loss which is incurred by this continual deadening of our mind cannot be made good by any other contrivance. In our desperate attempts to do so we have to invoke the magic of *maya* and our importence jumps for joy at the prospect of getting hold of Aladin's lamp. Of course every one has to admit that there is nothing to beat Aladin's lamp, its only inconvenience being that it beats one to get hold of. The unfortunate part of it is that the person, whose agreed is great, but whose powers are feeble, and who has lost all confidence in his own intellect, simply will not allow himself to dwell on the difficulties of be-speaking the services of some genie of the lamp. He can only be brought to exert himself at all by holding out the speedly prospect of getting at the wonderful lamp. If any one attempts to point out the futility of his hopes, he fills the air with wailing and imprecation, as at a robber making away with his all.

In the heat of the enthusiasm of the partition days a band of youths attempted to bring about the millennium through political revolution. Their offer of themselves as the first sacrifice to the fire which they had lighted makes not only their own country, but other countries as well, bore the head to them in reverence. Their physical failure shines forth as the effulgence of spiritual glory. In the midst of their supreme travail, they realized at length that the way of bloody revolution is not the true way; that where there is no politics, a political revolution is like laking a shortcut to nothing; that the wrong way may appear shorter, but it does not reach the goal, and only grievously hurts the feet. The refusal to pay the full price for a thing leads to the loss of the price without the gain of the thing. These impetuous youths offered their lives as the price of their country's deliverance; to them it meant the loss of their all, but alas ! the price offered on behalf of the country was insufficient. I feel sure that those of them who still survive must have realized by now, that the country must be the creation of all its people, not of one section alone. It must be the expression of all their forces of heart, mind and will.

This creation can only be the fruit of that *yoga*, which gives outward form to the inner faculties. Mere political or economical *yoga* is not enough; for that all the human powers must unite.

When we turn our gaze upon the history of other countries, the political steed comes prominently into view; on it seems to depened wholly the progress of the carriage. We forget that the carriage also must be in a fit conditions to move; its wheels must be in agreement with one another and its parts well fitted together; with which not only have fire and hammer and chisel been busy but much thought and skill and energy have also been spent in the process. We have seen some countries which are externally free and independent; when, however, the political carriage is in motion, the noise which it makes arouses the whole neighbourhood from a slumber and the jolting produces aches and pains in the limbs of the helpless passangers. It comes to pieces in the middle of the road, and it takes the whole day to put it together again with the help of ropes and strings. Yet however, loose the screws and, however, crooked the wheels, still it is a vehicle of some sort after all. But for such a thing as is our country,—a mere collection of jointed logs, that not only have no wholeness amongst themselves, but are contrary to one another,·--for this to be dragged along a few paces by the temporary pull of some common greed or anger, can never be called by the name of political progress. Therefore, is it not, in our case, wiser to keep for the moment our horse in the stable and begin to manufacture a real carriage ?

From the writings of the young men, who have come back out of the valley of the shadow of death. I feel sure some such thoughts must have occurred to them. And so they must be realizing the necessity of the practice of *yoga* as of primary importance;--that form which is the union in a common endeavour of all the human faculties. This cannot be attained by any outside blind obedience, but only by the realization of self in the light of intellect. That which fails to illumine the intellect, and only keeps it in the obsession of some delusion, is its greatest obstacle.

The call to make the country our own by dint of our own creative power, is a great call. It is not merely including the people to take up some external mechanical exercise; for man's life is not in making cells of uniform pattern like the bee, nor in

incessant weaving of webs like the spider; this greatest powers are within, and on these are his chief reliance. If by offering some allurement we can induce man to cease from thinking, so that he may go on and on with some mechanical piece of work, this will only result on prolonging the sway of *maya*, under which our country has all along been languishing. So far, we have been content with surrendering our greatest right—the right to reason and to judge for ourselves—to the blind forces of *shastric* injunctions and social conventions. We have refused to cross the seas, because Manu has told us not to do so. We refuse to eat with the Mussalman, because prescribed usage is against it. In other words, we have systematically pursued a course of blind routine and habit, in which the mind of man has no place. We have thus been reduced to the helpless condition of the mater who is altogether dependent on his servant. The real master, as I have said, is the internal man; and he gets into endless trouble, when he becomes his own servant's slave—a mere automation. manufactured in the factory of servitude. He can then only rescue himself from one master by surrendering himself to another. Similarly, he who glorifies inertia by attributing to it a fanciful purity, becomes, like it, dependent on outside impulses, both for rest and motion. The inertness of mind, which is the basis of all slavery, cannot be got rid of by a docile submission to being hoodwinked, nor by going through the motions of a wound-up mechanical doll.

The movement, which has now succeeded the Swadeshi agitation, is ever so much greater and has moreover extended its influence all over India. Previously, the vision of our political leaders had never reached beyond the English-knowing classes, because the country meant for them only that bookish aspect of it which is to be found in the pages of the Englishman's history. Such a country was merely a mirage born of vapourings in the English language, in which flitted about thin shades of Burke and Gladstone, Mazzini and Garibaldi. Nothing resembling self-sacrifice or true feeling for their countrymen was visible. At this juncture, Mahatma Gandhi came and stood at the cottage door of the destitute millions, clad as one of themselves, and talking to them in their own language. Here was the truth at last, not a mere quotation out of a book. So the name of Mahatma, which was given to him, is his true name. Who else has felt so many

men of India to be of his own flesh and blood ? At the touch of Truth the pent-up forces of the soul are set free. As soon as true love stood all India's door, it flew open; all hesitation and holding back vanished. Truth awakened truth.

Stratagem in politics is a barren policy,—this was a lesson of which we were sorely in need. All honour to the Mahatma, who made visible to us the power of Truth. But reliance on tactics is so ingrained in the cowardly and the weak, that in order to eradicate it, the very skin must be sloughed off. Even today, our worldly-wise men cannot get rid of the idea of utilizing the Mahatma as a secret and more ingenious move in their political gamble. With their minds corroded by untruth, they cannot understand what an important thing it is that the Mahatma's supreme love should have drawn forth the country's love. The thing that has happened in nothing less than the birth of freedom. It is the gain by the country of itself. In it there is no room for any thought, as to where the Englishman is, or is not This love is self-expression. It is pure affirmation. It does not argue with negation; it has no need for argument.

Some notes of the music of this wonderful awakening of India by love floated over to me across the seas. It was a great joy to me to think that the call of this festivity of awakening would come to each one of us; that the true *shakti* of India's spirit, in all its multifarious variety, would at last find expression. This thought came to me because I have always believed that in such a way India would find its freedom. When Lord Buddha voiced forth the truth of compassion for all living creatures, which he had obtained as the fruit of his own self-discipline, the manhood of India was roused and poured itself forth in science and art and wealth of every kind. True, in the matter of political unification the repeated attempts that where then made have often failed; nevertheless India's mind had awakened into freedom from its submergence in sleep, and its overwhelming force would brook no confinement within the petty limits of country. It overflowed across ocean and desert, scattering its wealth of the spirit over every land that it touched. No commercial or military exploiter, today, has ever been able to do anything like it. Whatever land these exploiters have touched has been agonized with sorrow and insult, and the fair face of the world has been scarred and disfigured. Why ? Because not greed but love is true. When

love gives freedom it does so at the very centre of our life. When greed seeks unfettered power, it is forcefully impatient. We saw this during the partition agitation. We then compelled the poor to make sacrifices, not always out of the inwardness of love, but often by outward pressure. That was because greed is always seeking for a particular result within a definite time. But the fruit which love seeks is not of today or tomorrow, nor for a time only : it is sufficient unto itself.

So, in the expectation of breathing the buoyant breezes of this new found freedom, I came home rejoicing. But what I found in Calcutta when I arrived depressed me. An oppressive atmosphere seemed to burden the land. Some outside compulsion seemed to be urging one and all to talk in the same strain, to work at the same mill. When I wanted to inquire, to discuss, my well-wishers clapped their hands over my lips, saying : "Not now". Today, in the atmosphere of the country, their is a spirit of persecution, which is not that of armed force, but something still more alarming, because it is invisible. I found, further, that those who had their doubts as to the present activities, if they happened to whisper them out, however, cautiously, however guardedly, felt some admonishing hand clutching them within. There was a newspaper which one day had the temerity to disapprove, in a feeble way, of the burning of cloth. The very next day the editor was shaken out of his balance by the agitation of his readers. How long would it take for the fire which was burning cloth to reduce his paper to ashes ? The sight that met my eye was, on the one hand, people immensely busy; on the other, intensely afraid. What I heard on every side was, that reason, and culture as well, must be closured. It was only necessary to cling to an unquestioning obedience. Obedience to whom ? To some *mantra*, some unreasoned creed !

And why this obedience ? Here again comes that same greed, our spiritual enemy. There dangles before the country the bait of getting a thing of inestimable value, dirt cheap and in double-quick time. It is like the *fakir* with his gold-making trick. With such a lure men cast so readily to the winds their independent judgment and wax so mightily wroth with those who will not do likewise. So easy is it to overpower, in the name of outside freedom, the inner freedom of man. The most deplorable part of it is that so many do not even honestly believe in the hope that

they swear by. "It will serve to make our countrymen do what is necessary" say they. Evidently, according to them, the India which once declared : "In Truth is victory, not in untruth" that India would not have been fit for Swaraj.

Another mischief is that the gain, with the promise of which obedience is claimed, is indicated by name, but is not defined. Just as when fear is vague it becomes all the more strong, so the vagueness of the lure makes it all the more tempting; inasmuch as ample room is left for each one's imagination to shape it to his taste. Moreover there is no driving it into a corner because it can always shift from one shelter to another. In short, the object of the temptation has been magnified through its indefiniteness, while the time and method of its attainment have been made too narrowly definite. When the reason of man has been overcome in this way, he easily consents to give up all legitimate questions and blindly follows the path of obedience. But can we really afford to forget so easily that delusion is at the root of all slavery—that all freedom means freedom from *maya* ? What if the bulk of our people have unquestioningly accepted the creed that by means of sundry practices Swaraj will come to them on a particular date in the near future, and are also ready to use their clubs to put down all further argument—that is to say, they have surrendered the freedom of their own minds and are prepared to deprive other minds of their freedom likewise,—is not this by itself a reson for profound misgiving ? We were seeking the exorcizer to drive out this very ghost; but if the ghost itself comes in the guise of exorcizer, then the danger is only heightened.

The Mahatma has own the heart of India with his love; for that we have all acknowledged his sovereignty. He has given us a vision of the *shakti* of truth; for that our gratitude to him is unbounded. We read about truth in books, we talk about it : but it is indeed a red-letter day, when we see it face to face. Rare is the moment, in many a long year, when such good fortune happens. We can make and break Congresses every other day. It is at any time possible for us to stump the country preaching politics in English. But the golden rod which can awaken our country in Truth and Love is not a thing which can be manufactured by the nearest goldsmith. To the wielder of that rod our profound salutation ! But if, having seen truth, our belief in it is not confirmed, what is the good of it all ? Our mind must acknowledge the truth of the intellect, just as our heart does the

truth of love. No Congress or other outside institution succeeded in touching the heart of India. It was roused only by the touch of love. Having had such a clear vision of this wonderful power of Truth, are we to cease to believe in it, just where the attainment of Swaraj is concerned ? Has the truth, which was needed in the process of awakenment, to be got rid of in the process of achievement ?

Let me give an illustration I am in search of a *vina* player. I have tried East and I have tried West, but have not found the man of my quest. They are all experts, they can make the strings resound to a degree, they command high prices, but for all their wonderful execution they can strike no chord in my heart. At last I come across one whose very first notes melt away the sense of oppression within. In him is the fire of the *shakti* of joy which can light up all other hearts by its touch. His appeal to me is instant, and I hail him as master. I then want *vina* made. For this, of course are required all kinds of material and a different kind of science. If, finding me to be lacking in the means, my master should be moved to pity and say : "Never mind, my son, do not go to the expense in workmanship and time which a *vina* will require. Take rather this simple string tightened across a piece of wood and practise on it. In a short time you will find it to be as good as a *vina*." Would that do ? I am afraid not. It would, in fact, be a mistaken kindness for the master thus to take pity on my circumstances. Far better if he were to tell me plainly that such things cannot be had cheaply. It is he who should teach me that merely one string will not serve for a true *vina*; that the materials required are many and various; that the lines of its moulding must be shapely and precise; that if there be anything faulty it will fail to make good music, so that all laws of science and technique of art must be rigorously and intelligently followed. In short, the true function of the master player should be to evoke a response from the depths of our heart, so that we may gain the strength to wait and work till the true end is achieved.

From our master, the Mahatma,—may our devotion to him never grow less !—we must learn the truth of love in all its purity, but the science and art of building up Swaraj is a vast subject. Its pathways are difficult to traverse and take time. For this task, aspiration and emotion must be there, but no less must study and thought be there likewise. For it, the economist must think, the

mechanic must labour, the educationist and statesmen must teach and contrive. In a word, the mind of the country must exert itself in all directions. Above all, the spirit of inquiry throughout the whole country must be kept intact and untramelled, its mind not made timid or inactive by compulsion, open or secret.

We know from past experience that it is not any and every call to which the country responds. It is because no one has yet been able to unite in *yoga* in the forces of the country in the work of its creation, that so much time has been lost over and again. And we have been kept waiting and waiting for him who has the right and the power to make the call upon us. In the old forests of India, our *gurus*, in the fulness of their vision of the Truth had sent forth such a call saying : "As the rivers flow on their downward course, as the months flow on to the the years, so let all seekers after Truth come from all side." The initiation into Truth of that day has borne fruit undying to this day, and the voice of its message still rings in the ears of the world.

Why should not our *Guru* of today, who would lead us on the paths of Karma, send forth such a call ? Why should he not say : "Come ye from all sides and be welcome. Let all the forces of the land be brought into action, for then alone shall the country awake. Freedom is in complete awakening, in full self-expression." God has given the Mahatma the voice that can call, for in him there is the Truth. Why should this not be our long-awaited opportunity ?

But his call came to one narrow field alone. To one and all he simply says : "Spin and weave, spin and weave." Is this the call : "Let all seekers after Truth come from all sides ?" Is this the call of the New Age to new creation ? When nature called to the bee to take refuge in the narrow life of the hive, millions of bees responded to it for the sake of efficiency, and accepted the less of six in consequence. But this sacrifice by way of self-atrophy led to the opposit of freedom. Any country, the people of which can agree to become neuters for the sake of some temptation, or command, carries within itself its own prison-house. To spin is easy, therefore, for all men it is an imposition hard to bear. The call to the ease of mere efficiency is well enough for the bee. The wealth of power, that is man's, can only become manifest when his utmost is claimed,

Sparta tried to gain strenth by narrowing herself down to a particular purpose, but she did not win. Athens sought to attain perfection by opening herself out in all her fulness,—and she did win. Her flag of victory still flies at the masthead of man's civilization It is admitted that European military camps and factories are stunting man, that their greed is cutting man down to the measure of their own narrow purpose, that for these reasons joylessness darkly lowers over the West. But if man be stunted by big machines, the danger of his being stunted by small machines, must be lost sight of. The Charkha in its proper place can do no harm, but will rather do much good. But where, by reason of failure to acknowledge the differences in man's tempara-ment, it is in the wrong place, there thread can only be spun at the cost of a great deal of the mind itself. Mind is no less valuable than cotton thread.

Some are objecting : "We do not propose to curb our minds, for ever, but only for a time." But why should it be even for a time ? Is it because within a short time spinning will give us Swaraj ? But where is the argument for this ? Swaraj is not concerned with our appeared only—it cannot be established on cheap clothing; its foundation is in the mind, which, with its diverse powers and its confidence in those powers, goes on all the time creating Swaraj for itself. In no country in the world is the building up of Swaraj completed. In some part or other of every nation, some lurking greed or illusion still perpetuates bondage. And the root of such bondage is always within the mind. Where then, I ask again, is the argument, that in our country Swaraj can be brought about by everyone engaging for a time in spinning ? A mere statement, in lieu of argument, will surely never do. If once we consent to receive fate's oracle from human lips that will add one more to the torments of our slavery and not the least one either. If nothing but oracles will serve to move us, oracles will have to be manufactured, morning, noon and night, for the sake of urgent needs, and all other voices would be defeated. Those for whom authority is needed in place of reason, will invariably accept despotism in place of freedom. It is like cutting at the root of a tree while pouring water on the top. This is not a new thing, I know. We have enough of magic in the country,—magical revelation, magical healing, and all kinds of divine intervention in muedane affairs. That is exactly why I am so anxious to re-instate reasons on

its throne. As I have said before, God himself has given the mind sovereignty in the material world. And I say today, that only those will be able to get and keep Swaraj in the material world who have realized the dignity of self-reliance and self-mastery in the spiritual world, those whom no temptation, no delusion, can induce to surrender the dignity of intellect into the keeping of others.

Consider the burning of cloth, heaped up before the very eyes of our motherland shivering and ashamed in her nakedness. What is the nature of the call to do this ? Is it not another instance of a magical formula ? The question of using or refusing cloth of a particular manufacture belongs mainly to economic science. The discussion of the matter by our countrymen should have been in the language of economics. If the country has really come to such a habit of mind that precise thinking has become impossible for it, then our very the fight should be against such a fata habit, to the temporary exclusion of all else of need be. Such a habit would clearly be the original sin from which all our ills are flowing. But far from this, we take the course of confirming ourselves in it by relying on the magical formula that foreign cloth is 'impure'. Thus, economics is bundled out and a fictitious moral dictum dragged into its place.

Untruth is impure in any circumstances, not merely because it may cause us material loss, but even when it does not, for it makes our inner nature unclean. This is a moral law and belongs to a heigher plane. But if there be anything wrong in wearing a particular kind of cloth, that would be an offence against economics, or hygiene, or aesthetics, but certainly not against morality. Some urge that any mistake which brings sarrow to body or mind is a moral wrong. To which I reply that sorrow follows in the train of every mistake. A mistake in geometry may make a road too long, or a foundation steak, or a bridge dangerous. But mathematical mistakes cannot be cured by moral maxims. If a student makes a mistake in his geometry problem and his exercise book is torn up in consequence, the problem will nevertheless remain unsolved until attacked by geometrical methods. But what if the schoolmaster comes to the conclusion that unless the exercise book are condemned and destroyed, his boys will never realize the folloy of their mistakes ? If such conclusion be well-founded, then I can only repeat that the reformation of such

moral weakness of these particular boys should take precedence over all other lessons, otherwise there is no hope of their becoming men in the future.

The command to born our foreign clothes has been laid on us, I, for one, am unable to obey it. Firstly because I conceive it to be my very first duty to put up a valiant fight against this terrible habit of blindly obeying orders, and this fight can never be carried on by our people being driven from one injunction to another. Secondly, I feel that the clothes to be burnt are not mine, but belong to those who most sorely need them. If those who are going naked should have given us the mandate to burn, it would, at least, have been a case of self-immolation and the crime of incendiarism would not lie at our door. But how can we expiate the sin of the forcible destruction of clothes which might have gone to women whose nakedness is actually keeping them prisoners, unable to stir out of the privacy of their homes ?

I have said repeatedly and must repeat once more that we cannot afford to lose our mind for the sake of any external gain. Where Mahatma Gandhi has declared war against the tyranny of the machine which is oppressing the whole world, we are all enrolled under his banner. But we must refuse to accept as our ally the illusion-haunted magic-ridden slave-mentality that is at the root of all the poverty and insult under which our country groans. Here is the enemy itself, on whose defeat alone Swaraj within and without can come to us.

The time, moreover, has arrived when we must think of one thing more, and that is this. The awakening of India is a part of the awakening of the world. The door of the New Age has been flung open at the trumpet blast of a great war. We have read in the Mahabharata how the day of self-revelation had to be preceded by a year of retirement. The same has happened in the world today. Nations had attained nearness to each other without being aware of it, that is to say, the outside fact was there, but it has not penetrated into the mind. At the shock of the war, the truth of it stood revealed to mankind. The foundation of modern, that is Western, civilization was shaken; and it has become evident that convulsion is neither local nor temporary but has traversed the whole earth and will last until the shocks between man and man, which have extended from continent to

continent, can be brought to rest, and a harmony be established.

From now onward, any nation which takes an isolated view of its own country will run counter to the spirit of the New Age, and know no peace. From now onward, the anxiety that each country has for its own safety must embrace the welfare of the world. For some time the working of the new spirit has occasionally shown itself even in the Government of India, which has had to make attempts to deal with its own problems in the light of the world problems. The war has torn away a veil from before our minds. What is harmful to the world, is harmful to each one of us. This was a maxim which we used to read in books. Now mankind has seen it at work and has understood that wherever there is injustice, even if the external right of possession is there, the true right is wanting. So that it is worth while to sacrifice some outward right in order to gain the reality. This immense change, which is coming over the spirit of raising it from the petty to the great, is already at work even in Indian politics. There will doubtless be imperfection and obstacles without number. Self-interest is sure to attack enlightened interest at every step. Nevertheless it would be wrong to come to the decision that the working of self-interest alone is honest, and the larger-hearted striving is hypocritical.

After sixty years of self-experience, I have found that out and out hyocrisy is an almost impossible achievement, so that the pure hypocrite is rarity indeed. The fact is, that the character of man has always more or less of duality in it. But our logical faculty, the trapdoor of our mind, is unable to admit opposites together. So when we find the good with the bad, the former is promptly rejected as spurious. In the universal movement, as it becomes manifest in different parts of the world, this duality of man's character cannot but show itself. And whenever it does, if we pass judgment from past experience, we are sure to pronounce the selfish part of it to be the real thing; for the spirit of division and exclusion did in fact belong to the past age. But if we come to our judgment in the light of future promise, then shall we understand the enlightened large-heartedness to be the reality, and the counsel which will unite each to each to be the true wisdom.

I have condemned, in unsparing terms, the present form and

scope of the League of Nations and the Indian Reform Councils. I therefore feel certain that will be no misunderstanding when I state that, even in these, I find signs of the Time Spirit, which is moving the heart of the West. Although the present form is unacceptable yet there is revcaled an aspiration, which is towards the truth, and this aspiration must not be condemned. In this morning of the world's awakening, if in only our own national striving there is no response to its universal aspiration, that will betoken the poverty of our spirit. I do not say for a moment that we should belittle the work immediately to hand. But when the bird is roused by the dawn, all its awakening is not absorbed in its search for food. Its wings respond unwearingly to the call of the sky, its throat pours forth for songs for joy of the new light. Universal humanity has sent us its call today. Let our mind respond in its own language ! For response is the only true sign of life. When of old we were immersed in the politics of dependence on others, our chief busincess was the compilation of others' shortcomings. Now that we have decided to dissociate our politics from dependence, are we still to establish and maintain it on the same recital of others' sins ? That state of mind so engendered will only raise the dust of angry passion, obscuring the greater world from our vision, and urge us more and more to take futile short cuts for the satisfaction of our passions. It is a sorry picture of India, which we shall display if we fail to realize for ourselves the greater India. This picture will have no light. It will have in the foreground only the business side of our aspiration. Mere business talent, however, has never created anything.

In the West, a real anxiety and effort of their higher mind to rise superior to business considerations, is beginning to be seen. I have come across many there whom this desire has imbued with the true spirit of the Sannyasin, making them renounce their home-world in order to achieve to unity of man, by destroying the bondage of nationalism; men who have within their own soul realized the Advaita of humanity. Many such have I seen in England who have accepted persecution and contumely from their fellow countrymen in their struggles to free other peoples from the oppression of their own country's pride of power. Some of them are amongst us here in India. I have seen Sannyasins too in France—Romain Rolland for one, who

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WHO IS A MAHATMA?*

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

I wished, when I came to Ahmedabad, to visit this Ashram once more, in which I spent a happy time with you a little over two years ago when Mahatmaji was with you. I know how very deeply you are all feeling his absence from your midst and how you would like me to speak to you before I leave. I will try to do so very briefly.

You are all living in this Ashram a life of self-sacrifice. I do hope that you will be able to realize the significance of that discipline which you are undergoing. All training, which takes the form of self-renunciation, has its positive aspect. It is nothing negative. Only, unfortunately, human beings make the mistake and get infatuated with the idea of suffering for its own sake and as an end in itself. That idea is not true.

What then is the true meaning of sacrifice ? It means that for human beings, the life of the body is not the best life, but the life of the soul. The material world which we share with the animals, is not the only world. We have higher needs, because we have a deeper and a higher life hidden within us. That hidden life is immortal. Our physical life must bear the burden of its finitude, but the spiritual life has its immortality. Only those human beings, who can get rid of the sheath of self, can reach that immortality. They must lose their separate self in order to realize the infinite.

*Address delivered by Gurudev Tagore to the inmates of Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati, when he visited the Ashram on December 4, 1922.

They must become *Dwija*,—twice-borne; born of the spirit; born into the light.

> They who realize the Infinite in themselves become immortal.

They realize the life that knows no loss; and it is the privilege of human beings to be born again into the sphere of immortality. Just as the chick breaks through the shell and comes out into the light, so men must break through the shell of self and come out into the world of spiritual freedom.

Since men have always felt dimly that the material world is not final, therefore, they have sought all kinds of discipline in order to rid themselves of its thraldom and bondage. All the different religions of the world have this one meaning. They expiess this one aspiration. They point the way to be born again, even through the portals of death—into the world of spirit, the sphere of immortality.

All forms of self-sacrifice, if they are true, must have this ultimate goal, the goal of freedom from the self into the realm of the unselfish. We must all of us have our *tapasya*, if we would truly get rid of self. That is the meaning of the prayer of our sages :

> Lead me out of the world of unreality into the kingdom of the truth. Lead me out of the world of darkness into the light. Lead me out of the world of death to immortality.

This prayer, which we all must utter, must be supposed by the life of self-sacrifice. Yoy are in this Ashram, going through that discipline of sacrifice. You are striving through *tapasya* to reach that *amrita loka*, that kingdom of immortality.

I am sure, you all feel that the spirit of Mahatmaji is working among you. What is the true meaning of the great word Mahatma ? It implies the emancipated soul that realizes itself in all souls. It means the life that is no longer confined within itself, but finds its larger soul of *Atman*, of Spirit. Then, in such realization, it becomes Mahatma. For it includes all spirits in itself.

That spirit is working among you, that Great Spirit. You have to realize that it is not merely deprivation of comfort that

has any value. There is no true value in sacrifice, in *tapasya*, except the spiritual value. For it is said in the Upanishad :

> This is the divinity of universal activity who is the great soul, who constantly dwells in the hearts of all peoples. They who know him with the heart and with the mind, which is sure in its perception, become immortal.

The meaning is this. The great universal spirit, the Mahatma, whose activities are for the whole world, is not for any confinement, or limitation, but for the universe. Therefore, this *Deva* himself is called Vishvakarma. He is the Infinite Soul, whose activities are for the whole. He dwells in the hearts of all. The Infinite Soul, whose activities are boundless and whose dwelling place is in the hearts of all human beings, he is the Mahatma.

The Upanishad text goes on to say :

> He dwells in the hearts of all men.

The meaning is that they who know him with heart and mind shall attain immortality.

To know him with the heart and mind is to be Vishvakarma, to dedicate one's activities to the service of the Universal Man; to be one with Mahatma, the Great Soul; to realize one's spiritual unity with all beings.

Our discipline of self-sacrifice is to attain this goal, it is to be emancipated from the confined life of self and to attain the true freedom of the spiritual life. It is for this great end that men are required to live the life of sacrifice.

In our scriptures it has been wonderfully said that Brahma began this world with sacrifice. Thus, he created the universe. Therefore, self-sacrifice, in this higher sense, is creative. When men live this life of self-sacrifice, they come thereby into touch with the Infinite, whose great sacrific in this world. When we have this spirit within, we are one with the Vishvakarma, we are united with the Mahatma; we become his partners, his fellow-workers, in the boundless work of creation.

PART II

9

SOME EARLY INFLUENCES IN TAGORE'S LIFE

SUKUMAR SEN*

The literary (and cultural) tradition which moulded Tagore's early life came from two different sources, viz., the ways and atmosphere of his family and his own acquisition by contemplation and study. The family, once very grandly aristocratic and wealthy, had suffered financial reverses. In Rabindranath's early years, the family had recovered financial stability to some extent but kept to the unostentatious habits acquired during the days of adversity. In matters of respectability and cultural acquirements, however, the family never deviated from the very highest standards. Rabindranath's father was the leading figure in the religious and social reform movement initiated by the Brahmo Samaj and was a man of the highest integrity and uprightness of character. Although he gave up one by one the orthodox religious ceremonies performed formerly with considerable pomp, he retained all the social counterparts thereof. There was thus no social or religious superciliousness in the family as characterized the later Brahmo attitude towards Hinduism. From his father Rabindranath imbibed the teaching of the Upanishads since his boyhood.

Young Rabindranath was educated mostly at home. The curriculum included gymnastics, wrestling, music and drawing, and

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regular study under the care of competent teachers of the humanities and sciences, taught mostly through the medium of Bengali. His early Sanskrit studies covered a very advanced course. As a tireless reader, he acquired a full acquaintance with the works of leading Bengali authors and poets of the day, quite early in life. Some learned Bengali periodicals of the day also engaged his youthful attention. Amongst the classics Kalidasa's works were his special favourite. A good edition of the Vaishnava lyrics, songs of Chandidas, Vidyapati and other early Vaishnava poets, published in two handy columes, fell into the hands of young Rabindranath and he read them with unusual relish. This was his first taste of the fountain of Bengali poetry, His earliest attempts at writing lyrical poetry were made in the diction of the Vaishnava songs, set on tune by himself and these became quite popular. This popularity has not died out since. Although repudiated by the author later in life as drab imitations, these poems under the pen-name of "Bhanusimha Thakur" have come to stay.

As a teenager Tagore did not care much for modern (i.e., mostly contemparary) poetry. Before he had a taste of Vaishnava poetry, he had copied the diction and metre of two of the best writers of Bengali poetry of the day viz., Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Hemchandra Benerji. The influence of these poets, however, did not last long. It would not be untrue to say that on the whole the young Tagore did not like the writings of any of the contemporary poets. But He was an admirer of the poetry of his eldest brother Dwijendranath, although no idea of copying his brother's poetry ever came to him. Nevertheless it had such an impression on him that in some of his writings we meet with lines and rimes which faintly echo his brother's poetry. Dwijendranath was facile in writing short verses in a light vein, couched in the form of popular poetry or nursery rime. Rabindranath also did the same but mostly towards the end of his life. There was another feature common between the youngest and the eldest brother. Dwijendranath's artistic gifts included sketching in ink or pencil but he never fully cultivated this gift. Another elder brother, Jyotirindranath possessed undoubted literary and artistic gifts and could draw good portraits in ink. Jyotirindranath was the only one of the seven brothers who took more than causal interest in the literary career of Rabindranath.

Jyotirindranath's wife was older than Rabindranath by a few

years. When she came into the family she was very young and she found in Rabindranath a meek and obedient admirer in the bewilderingly big household. She would listen patiently to the verses written by the budding poet and would give her approval. It stimulated the poetic imagination of the boy. She was a regular reader of Bengali poetry and fiction and she especially liked the poems of Biharilal Chakravarti who was a friend of the family. Rabindranath considered Chakravarti as the most sincere of the contemporary Bengali poets. In his earlier poems Tagore was influenced by Chakravarti especially with regard to the metre.

At the instance of his wife mainly, Jyotirindranath organised a literary circle comprising the lirerary minded members of the family and their friends. Young Rabindranath was accepted as a full member. When *Bharati*, the monthly journal sponsored by Jyotirindranath came out with Dwijendranath as editor, Rabindranath, then only 17, emerged as one of its regular contributors. At that time his interest in English had been awakened. In the same year he was sent to England to qualify for the Bar, but he was there only for a few months, living mostly as a paying guest with some English families. The experience he gathered by living with English families was of great value to him in his social and cultural education. The free and happy family life of the West was something unknown in the East. On his return from England, he tried to create the same atmosphere in his own family, wrote two lyric playlets on the pattern of the English opera and staged them successfully at home with the help of some members of the family. These playlets are the only productions that indicate a direct influence of Western tradition on his works.

Rabindranath's second elder brother Satyendranath was a judge in Bombay, at whose suggestion the youngest brother had been sent to England. Rabindranath lived with this brother for some time at Ahmedabad and other places, read English literature mainly and through English acquired some local history which interested him. At this time he wrote *Prakritir Pratishodh* (Revenge of Nature), an immature work no doubt but his first significant lyric drama. A tragic incident happened in the family. Jyotirindranath's wife suddenly died (1885). It was the first great shock in Rabindranath's life. This bereavement turned his mind

from nature to man.

Introspective from his childhood, and accepting the spiritual teachings of his father's faith, his mood now took a turn to seek emotional mysticism in outside nature as well as in the behaviour of man that was his own self. The verses of Kalidasa's *Meghaduta* now revealed to him a new meaning : the unending quest of man for the Home (and the Beloved) from which he had been banished by fate. The Vaishnava lyrics also now acquired a new spiritual significance for him : Radha of Vaishnava poetry is Man (that is his own self) and Krishna the unobtainable fulfilment of Man's (i.e. his) desire. Between the two there is an impassable gulf of separation but there is also a sure promise that the two will meet ultimately when the cycle of creation is completed. He now looked upon Nature not only is companionable or friendly but also as the manifestation of the eternity of the universe (i.e., Brahman) and upon man as an integral part of Nature.

After another short visit to England, he was now about 30, his father put him in charge of their large estate in Bengal and Orissa. He lived at several places and also moved about in a house-boat from place to place on the mighty river Padma and its many branches. This life among the rural people and in the midst of rural nature gave him a feeling of peace and serenity and intimacy with the various moods of Nature. At this time he came in contact with some men and women belonging to a mystic sect allied to Vaishnavism, called Bauls. He was interested in their peculiar attitude to life and was moved by their songs of mystic meaning. Their free and easy life attracted him and influenced his poetry. Prone as he was to emotional mysticism, his poetry was somewhat leaning towards the symbolical. But it was not yet time for his poems to sound a distinct devotional note. Preoccupied with nature and life around him, he was feeling an uneasy conflict of emotions. His duties and obligations called him on way and his emotional inclipations pulled him another way. But a proper understanding of the problem was not delayed and there was a compromise even though the conflict was not quite resolved yet. He came to the conclusion that his urge for outward activities and his craving for detachment and peace were both manifestations of his inner self.

The family estate was divided between two branches of the family and Tagore gave up the management, left the peaceful

domain of the rivers and the fields, and came to live in Calcutta, but city life became unbearable to him after a few weeks. He temporarily came in contact with the new Nationalistic movement. When he found that the movement was not taking the line of constructive national work, such as education, social welfare and co-operative effort but was taking the shape of emotional effusion and narrow politics, he took himself away from it. The image of the peaceful hermitage of ancient India caught his imagination. He was now convinced that the regeneration of the country could be brought about if we followed the ideal of a simple life and trained our children in such surroundings where there would not be any distractions of the city life. With this end in view he made a permanent residence at Santiniketan and started his school. The rest of his life and work is well known.

10

TAGORE AND NEHRU : A STUDY IN CONTRAST

M. ECHILLES

1

FAMILY ANTECEDENTS

Talent may be inherited in some cases but genius is the result of supreme efforts on the part of the individual himself. This is the commonly held belief. Whether Pavlov students or followers of J. B. S. Haldane or other such scientists would reject or confirm this assumption is a matter which those interested in the science of genetics might pursue with some advantage to themselves. But to those unfamiliar with the intricate theories of this science, it seems that not only talent is inherited sometimes by some 'individuals' but also other family antecedents, including the temperament of the members of the family, influence these 'some individuals'. *Litterateurs* like Lenin, Wells and Shaw might entirely cast off their family influences, and turn out literature for the most part stamped with their own individuality: but not so Nehru and Tagore. In their case the influence of the family is quite marked; and so far as Nehru is concerned, the inherited family habits and temperamental characteristics could be discerned in him even now when he is in prime of his life.

What are these family characteristics which sometimes distinguish Nehru from Tagore, and at others give the two men the appearance of similarity ? How far have these very characteristics influenced their life work ?

The Bengal Poet came of a zamindar family. His father was one of those enlightened Bengal landlords (with interests centred in cities too) who have been made familiar to us by such writers as Bankim Chatterjee and the Poet Tagore himself (some of the characters in his novels bear keen resemblance to the members of his family and might be described as 'family pen-portraits'). The unlettered know such characters through the medium of the films.

However, here the analogy ends. The Poet's father did not spoil his child, as admittedly many Bengal landlords do their children by allowing them to become political or spiritual vagabonds. Noguchi once called Tagore 'a spiritual vagabond'. That was an unkind cut. Perhaps, sometimes, Tagore does sojourn in the mystical world, leaving his readers in a baffled state, and wondering, whether the Poet was not indulging in vague similes or metaphors. However, if one were to view the spiritual ideas of the Poet in the background of his peasant-proprietor-class culture and remember that many a Bengalee youth of his means fondered on the rock of Hindu asceticism and took to the jungles or the wilderness of the religious preaching; then it would seem (to men less prejudiced than Noguchi) that poetry (even occasionally vague) balanced the spiritual ideas of Rabindranath, and from the very beginning he eschewed the company of the *sadhus* and such 'spiritual vagabonds'. True he never formed any definite ideas about what Noguchi was pleased to call spiritualism. But it is not to be wondered at. Tagore was primarily a poet, a lover of the beauty of Nature. like William Wordsworth or Shelley. His spiritual or mystical excursions are natural in his family and class background, and often excusable, for, art like other substances contains useful as well as the useless matter. One should treat Tagore's spiritual talks as mere effuvia of a well meaning poet of Nature who could not always rise above the general outlook of society in his province and in his family (and perhaps in his country too). If he is not much worse, and he certainly belied the epithet of Noguchi, we have in part to thank his father for it, who was of course responsible for the education of his son.

To avoid his son getting entangled in spiritual nonsense and the abominable cult of the Indian saints, his father gave him the secular education of the Brahma Samaj which, whatever one might

think of its claims to be a sort of a Catholic party in Indian religious movement of the day, had at its head a very enlightened and liberal statesman, Rammohan Roy, who had travelled abroad, and knew a thing or two about liberalism as well as Cobden, Bright, Parnell, Bradlaugh and other foremost liberals of his time.

Brahma Samaj liberalism formed the back-ground of the ideas of Devendranath Tagore. The younger man even then essentially a poet, did not swallow with equanimity all that was imparted to him by way of secular education. He did not like it and indeed there was not much to like in the orthodoxy of the time.

The revolt in him took the form of hymns of Nature and hymns about country-wide poverty.

It is characteristic of his father that he did not prevent his son from indulging in such activities; and though he might have wished him to become a stalwart pillar of his own secular cult, he tolerated his son's ideas. For this toleration the posterity has to thank his father, and not for any secular education that he gave him and which did the Poet precious little good. There was only one hall-mark of this secular education given to Rabindranath, and that was that the boy began (not wrongly) to respect the liberal political ideas of Rammohan Roy, eschewing the religious nonsense of that leader.

Such trend in this young man of acute poetic and political sensibilities was a good omen; and it stood out in glaring contrast with the peurile politics of many a young man of his time.

The broad bases of a *front paysan* or common front with the peasants were laid, and later on we find the Poet preaching ideas which to us of the latey day seem little different from the established concept of the popular front.

The young kulak had crossed over the divide, and joined the popular forces in the struggle againt black reaction in Bengal and elsewhere. This boy was then free from spiritual or political vagaries of his time.

What were the love affairs of Rabindranath ? The British people banned any discussions about the love affairs of Victoria, their queen, for quite a long time. It is well known that the American films portraying her life were not exhibited in England till the popular forces made an end of this kind of muzzling of

press activity and suppressing of the human urge for curiosity. Now we know that Queen Victoria had love affairs with Disraeli, Peel, and many more, just as Elizabeth or Catherine of Russia had.

In India, a moral censorship prevails about the love affairs of the great men. The sooner it is lifted the better. In some cases we might expect to be shocked, in others midly amused, and in some cases we might be annoyed. What would a chronicler of the private life of the young Poet enfold ? For the present we can skip over this aspect of his life and compare what we have discussed about his secular education (or abortive secular education) and political education with similar or identical trends in Nehru when he was of the same age.

The 'shadow' secular education in the case of Nehru was the theosophical teachings imparted to him. His father appointed a theosophist as his teacher. Was it a reactionary move or a belated effort like that of Devendranath to foist a particular religious cult on his son ? And was it successful ?

Motilal Nehru was not a theosophist though he was consider ably attacted by many of the familiar credos of this cult and was a great friend of theosophist leaders such an Annie Besant, etc. He wanted that his son while learning the sciences and the arts should also have a smattering of this philosophy. In any case he did not want to foist this cult on him and indeed we find that younger Nehru was never much of a theosophist.

Love of poetry was also inculcated in the son by his father—elder Nehru—who had read prodigiously the English, Persian, as well as the tribal poetry of India usually called Urdu poetry. He was also familiar with Persian poetry written by Indian *litterateurs* who in their hunt for a foreign language as the medium of expression never looked beyond the banks of the Tigris. The result was that these people turned out poetry which for its bad language continues to remain an object of amusement to the world. Nehru junior devoured this kind of poetry too just as he did Walter de la Mare, Shelley and other whom he quotes prodigiously and with literary precision that well might win the praise of Archibald Macleish or Desmond MacCarthy. He was of course not a writer of poetry like Tagore, but the Poet of Bengal has not quoted as many foreign poets in his writings as Nehru has done.

Did younger Nehru's poetic leanings or his small-scale theosophical education provide the basis for his liberalism and socialism just as similar trends in Tagore did ? Here we should leave this discussion about the philosophical and poetic trends of the two boys and for a while probe the class basis of the Nehru family just as we have analysed the class outlook of the Tagores. If the Tagores were of peasant-proprietor family and the early education of the younger Tagore was originally planned by his father according to the ideas then current in his class; the Nehrus belonged to the city *bourgeoisie*. Living in this city *bourgoeis* circles where the ritual mark on the forehead and burning of the incense at home was considered of greater importance than the displaying of the political emblem, Nehru the younger at first eschewed the company of the underdog. He did not fraternise with the city workers as Tagore did not with the peasants, for the simple reason that such city workers were scarce then and indeed the growth of the proletariat was an event of the later-day epoch. But if Tagore due to his peculiar peasant surroundings felt the urge of socialism earlier than Nehru, the liberal nationalist (this phrase frequently used by a professor of a Lahore college, the late Gulshan Rai, should not be confused with a typically narrow Hinduistic philosophy which that gentleman propounded. What he meant from liberal nationalism was of course Hindu Sabha liberal nationalist standpoint; something very remote from Kunzru's liberal nationalism or that propounded by Rammohan Roy) urge in the two boys were similar. By a remarkable coincidence both the Brahma Samaj as well as the theosophical cult have in part helped the growth of a healthy liberal nationalist standpoint in the country. The theosophist leader Annie Besant was a liberal, when Nehru was cramming theosophical teachings. She grew up to be a greater radical than Rammohan and a practical politician too; which the latter could never be, being too much enmeshed in the religious revivalist movements of his time. Looking back in this year of grace the liberal nationalist leanings of the boy Tagore or of Nehru seem trivial; for both have blossomed out into full-fledged radicals and patriots. But it was no small matter then, and what is important for posterity, Nehru's political and philosophical trends at that time proved a steel wall against the vagaries of the youth of the city *bourgeoisie* of the United Provinces. As in Bengal so in U.P. spiritualism as well as

nationalism were then in rage among the *bourgeoisie*, and many a youth without having the advantages of the family antecedents which Tagore and Nehru had fondered on the rocks or sang "Ah ! Wilderness." Like Devendranath Tagore it did not take long for Motilal to discover that his son having grown tired of philosophical liberalism was going the whole-hog radical way. And like the Bengalee kulak he did not prevent him from taking that path nor for that matter did he later show any aversion towards his socialist programme though no doubt in the beginning there was no end of row at home on this subject. In the end the wishes of the younger man prevailed. The same was the case in the Tagore family. There Tagore's wishes prevailed. The love life of Jawaharlal Nehru is also unknown and though he relates the event of his marriage ceremony in his autobiography, he does not tell us all the events of which the climax was that particular event. We know his as a good brother, son, husband and a politician of whom India might deservedly be proud; but we know nothing about the romantic temperament (or otherwise) of the lover of poetry in different languages.

When at last the moral censorship in this country of ours is lifted in case of the love life of Tagore, who is by far more respected of the two sons of India, then perhaps we might know more about the other great man, who has so discrectly avoided taking up this subject in hisworld-famed and world-known autobiography. In the case of Nehru, it was perhaps due to the fact that he was just then in bereavement. But now in his case as in that of Tagore, we can leave this subject to some Indian Philip Guedella or Robert Graves.

What else did these two men—Devendranath Tagore and Motilal Nehru—the heads of two distinguished families in Bengal and U.P. pass on to their sons by way of their cultural or intellectual heritage ?

The two men did not stand in the way of the younger men continuing their philosophical or political excursions and also, which is important, they did not insist on their making a contribution to the family which could prevent a sliding scale income—a factor which, though not common in Nehru and Tagore families because of the immense stored up wealth, had all the same to be kept in view. For some time the expenses of the two families were heavy, and only the legal practice of elder Nehru could

maintain an even scale between income and expenditure while in case of Devendranath's family, the finances were just in a tolerable condition in the elder Tagore's lifetime. After his death, it deteriorated, so that the younger Tagore had to sell some of the land. Later, however, money poured in with increasing rapidity.

But the elder stalwarts, conscious as they were of the dignity of their cause, could naturally in this matter exert pressure on the younger men. Would it have been desirable ? What if Tagore and Nehru had as young men taken to some profession to add to the family income and maintain the kulak and the city *bourgeoisie* tradition respectively. Could they then become so well known as they have ? Perhaps in the end their abilities in their particular spheres would have moulded for them the path of glory. Fame might have come of them. But in any case their parents did not insist on their making contribution to family finances.

The two men were not shirkers of work, occasionally they did contribute their mite and in some cases made some money. Later on this habit of having a private income continued and we find that Nehru made handsome money out of his books which by the way he still writes. In case of Tagore his activity was centred over writing poetry, but he earned money from painting, and from Santiniketan as well as Sriniketan. He managed his estate well and this brought about increase in his income. Though in the long run it was better that neither Tagore nor Nehru as young men tried to prop up the structure of landlordism or city *bourgeoisie* in their families by making a financial contribution for such purposes—one wishes that in several matters with different motives—they should have devoted greater attention to certain aspects of their home affairs. For instance, young Tagore, socialiss-minded as he was, could organise the work of his farm on socialist lines by mechanising the agriculture and socialising the means of production. This would have yielded greater agricultural produce, and what is equally important led to an appreciable increase in the standard of living of those engaged in in the frame work. Many a young man of Tagore's means and his socialist ideas have found it difficult to translate into action their ideas of socialism; even though it means adopting of a profession which is quite remunerative to them and by no means waste of time.

As for Nehru the younger, it seems his own property is not quite managed according to the ideals for which he has striven in

his life. A landlord at Lucknow All-Parties Conference, angered over the socialist talks of younger Nehru, remarked that Anand Bhavan had not been pulled down. That was a foolish remark. Since then part of the Anand Bhavan has been given over to the Congress and it is called Swaraj Bhavan. It is a very big building and most of it remains empty. There are also plots of land and some houses near it, which are lying almost useless, except for the fact that the Congress flag still flutters over the building.

Allahabad has its own working-class problem and the workers in U.P. have like those of Andulsia in Spain, a very low standard of living, perhaps among lowest in India and Asia. Could not greater part of this building be so fashioned as to provide residential flats for the working class ? Could not it be made into something resembling the *Karl Marx and Engels Hof* in Vienna, which politician Nehru has no doubt seen and admired. The Allahabad Municipality, which is Congress-controlled, could give financial and techanical aid. The local Congress Committee, the communists' organisation and Congress Socialist Party which are by the way moneyed organisations and financially well off could give help that they could. And with Nehru himself and ex-Minister of Health Vijaylaxmi guiding the scheme, wonders might achieved in this direction. This is however one instance of the methods which a socialist could employ to set his own house in order.

If neither Nehru nor Tagore ever thought of it, it was because, as youg men, following the ancient example they left everything to their parents, and accepted with resignation whatever was done by their elders. The elders by not inviting the attention of the young men in this particularly constructive move of liberalism at home misused that doctrine. The nation was benefiting from the liberal and the patriotic efforts of Nehru the younger and literary and political writings of Tagore, but if this matter had been also attended to it could prove of greater benefit to the nation. Even now, Nehru (of course his sisters too) could break the family tradition in this matter, and the heirs and the successors of Tagore translate into action (at home) the socialist doctrines of the late Bengal Poet.

However this is an excursion into the realm of future. For the present dealing with the family antecedents we can only remark that here was one more example which showed that in

their conduct at home sometimes Nehru and Tagore bore striking resemblance to each other.

Another characteristic which the two young men inherited from their family was the love of the soil—the two loved their provinces. This is not to say that they were not internationalists. But they were busy with the problems of their respective provinces. This excessive zeal for the provincial affairs as well as international politics was a characteristic of the political outlook of Devendranath Tagore as well as Motilal Nehru. However, so long as this zeal of the two young men was directed towards the broad issues facing their province, all was well. But sometimes lesser men also keen about provincial welfare succeeded in winning over their sympathy for their particular cause, and the result was that their prestige received a set-back. The examples of such conduct are Nehru's attitude towards working-class affairs in Cawnpore and elsewhere, The U.P. politician was sometimes without even scant justice bitter about the attitude of the workers and lashed out at their leaders. His attitude towards Kisan Sabha and the communists left much to be dired.

Tagore's symphathy with Bose certainly a less objectionable feature of his provincialism but it got him sometimes entangled in needless internal quibbles and the fact remains that neither Bose nor Kiran Shankar Roy have been free from political errors of great magnitude. Bandying about the name of Tagore in connection with internal factional fight did bring about immense confusion in the minds of those who have always respected Tagore as a poet and politician no mean repute.

This excessive zeal for provincialism was deepended by the fact that the two families in their social relationship rarely looked beyond the borders of the province. The matrimonial alliances were of such nature that it became a sort of tribal ritual to avoid forming of such relationship with non-Bengalees or non-Kashmiries. The fact that in some cases the Nehru broke this tradition made little difference. The new-comers in the family were tied to the apronstring of intensely narrow Kashmiri social code. Civil marriage was not always of such nature as to invite radical change in the social code.

However in this case, one could not apportion all the blame on the two young men. Since their youth they had revolted against this system. Their writings as well as speeches and

activities in the latter period bore testimony to their broad-based ideas of social relationship. For the failures (in the early stages) of their families to come up to their standard in this matter, the blame should fall on all. It is doubtful, how any single or even three or four persons in a family could stage a revolt against such social cutoms.

All these antecedents which have been enumerated above betokened a degree of mental harmony between the parents and their sons (with clam disturbed sometimes by differences of opinion on social and political matters, in which matter the two parties agreed to respect the view-point of each other). which should serve as a guiding beacon to other families.

Motilal Nehru towards the end of his life treated his son as a political comrade, and consulted him as such in high matters of politics.

Similarly Poet Tagore had an identity of outlook with his father so far as his poetic philosophy was concerned. The two men exchanged notes on such subjects as the love of Nature, God as the embodiment of beauty of Nature and many more mystical allegories rather difficult to understand for the layman. These provided a basis for communion between the elder and the younger Tagore.

When making political and social pronouncements the younger man invariably consulted his father, so long as he lived. This may seem rather old-fashioned but judged in the background of the philosophical outlook of the Tagore family, this was not at all odd.

II

SOCIALIST COMRADES

Like family antecedents do not always mean that the growth in the matter of socialism should be also identical. Tagore and Nehru both had identical family antecedents, but in their devotion towards socialism they took two different paths. Of the two, Tagore was an early convert. It was in 1907 that at Pabna Political Conference he announced that he wanted to devote his time to the socialist cause. He brought forward a manifesto which purported to uplift the conditions of the peasants. There were many high-

sounding phrases in the manifesto. Considered from the point of view of scientific socialism it was a very faulty manifesto. In fact it was full of idealistic philosophy. There was not much in the manifesto to promise hope to the working class, but all the same it was a new step in the political movement of the country. Nehru was at that time still a student in England. He had not yet studied socialism nor made any pronouncement in regard to the peasants or the workers. He did not follow the teachings of Tagore in this matter or for that matter of any other socialist leader of the world. All that we know from his writings lends colour the belief that he was only a nationalist at that time and that the working-class problems did not interest him at all. In fact in political matters at that time he was much more of a radical than Tagore. His idealism in politics took the form of extreme devotion to nationalism. It is only after the war when he returned to this country that his conversion to socialism took place. By that time Tagore had gone much ahead of his original Pabna manifesto. He had written many books including some novels depicting the working-class life in the cities. He had also portrayed the evils of the money-lending practice in India. All indication was that he had now become full-fledged socialist. It was not a question of going back to any previous programme. New times required new ideas. A socialist had to keep himself well-informed about the current events in the world around him. He had to fashion his outlook accordingly. Now what did the time require of Tagore ? What was the correct path for him ? We find that at that time the Revolution in Russia had finished. The civil war was going on. There was a lot of blood-shed. And there was a lot of loose thinking about the Russian Revolution. People condemned it unthinkingly. For instance both Motilal Nehru and C.R. Dass criticised the Russian Revolution. They said some very unkind words. Happily these words did not find an echo in the ideas of Tagore. He could not condemn Russia. It was against his principles. But neither could he bring forward any concrete proposals about the socialist movement in this country. He was a poet; not a politician to give a firm lead to the country. In his poetry he adopted a more realistic tone and thought differently about the working-class problems. He frequently held up the example of Russia and praised it in his writings. In his case there was no question of his praising Russia merely because such praise

was the fashion of the day. He spoke his heart out in this matter, and nobody who had heard his previous utterances could ever say that he was only pretending to be a friend of Russia.

If Tagore could not take a bold line about Russia and enunciate a practical policy for his country, did Nehru do that ? We find that the U.P. leader, who was of course a new convert to socialism, did not enunciate any practical policy about Russia either. For the moment socialism became a back number for him and he was completely engrossed in the problem of the freedom of his country. Of course, he did not become a hot-head radical as of old. But he had to take a plunge in the struggle for freedom. This took him to prison. But when he was released he could look round and take interest in the socialist movement of his country. This he did. He went to the villagers not telling them in as many words that Russia had taken a step forward in the history of the world and they should follow the Russian example; but he told them that the struggle of nationalism and of the peasants was inextricably bound up with each. And that good nationalists had to be good socialists also. That they as peasants should take interest in the freedom of the country and at the same time devote attention to their own problems. They should try to solve their problems in the socialist way, which was of course the only sane way to solve the economic problems of society. And they should try to solve their nationalist problems in the Congress way. This message of Nehru was exactly what the peasants wanted. They heard it keenly and followed it in their everyday life. There was no need to sing any poems to the peasants, and Nehru and did not recite any poetry before them.

This was one example of the way Nehru tried to serve the cause of socialism. After that we find that in 1927 he went to Russia. He studied the Soviet system of government and the Russian economic system thoroughly. He gained first-hand experience of it. He met foreign socialists and communists in Brussels, Paris, Berlin, London and Moscow. He heard their opinions about the world socialist movement and the Indian nationalist and socialist movement. He told them his own impressions about his country. This exchange of views was helpful to both sides just as it was extremely timely. When Nehru returned to this country, he embodied his views about Russia in a book.

Tagore visited Russia three years afterwards. He did not meet many socialist or communist leaders outside Russia. Different motives acuated his visit to Russia. He had gone there with the heart of a poet, who also happened to be an internationalist and socialist. He did not forget the economic or political changes in Russia. He studied the Russian economic plans. He wrote articles called *Letters from Russia.* These articles are in no way less informative than the extremely lucid and documentary book written by Nehru about the U.S.S.R. There is a good deal of information about the Soviet economic system which Tagore held up as an example for the Indian socialists to follow.

However, while Tagore only wrote this book and thus enunciated to his followers his and their course of action. Nehru spread this message to the country through the forum of the Congress. When he was elected President, he began his memorable address by referring to Russia in terms of praise. Which of the two messages had greater reception in the country and outside ?

Doubtless so far as the outer world was concerned Tagore's voice was heard with greater attention for the simple reason that he was well known in foreign political and literary circles and the masses of Asia held him in great veneration. Nehru was comparatively less known. But so far as the Indian audiences were concerned, Nehru drove home the lesson of his Russian visit and paved the way for the rise of the socialist party in India and also, though the communists here do not readily recognise their debt to Nehru, served their cause too.

It should be borne in mind that communism was particularly a bugbear for the Indian official circles just then. The Meerut Conspiracy Case which was a sort of Indian Reichstag Fire Trial having just ended, these circles were easily alarmed at any praise of the Soviet regime.

It was said that Nehru had dissociated himself from the league against imperialism and that was sufficient reason for communist anger against him. This was loose thinking and Trotskyist dogmatism. Nehru's speech at Lahore Congress should be considered a landmark in the country and for generations the parties of the left should not foreget the debt which they owe Nehru for having set the ball rolling when that task was no easy matter.

Whatever we might say of his attitude towards the league

against imperialism one feels that by his socialist speech at Lahore (as distinguished from his political line-up with Gandhi, which was indeed open to objection) he had more than atoned for his previous action. But even in case of Tagore, we should not under-estimate the effect of his writings about Russia on the middle-class intelligentsia and the Bengal people. The Bengalees were made class-conscious by his writings about Russia. The socialists might think it somewhat amazing that a poet could by his writings make people class-conscious, especially when such writings were by no means frequent.

But this again smacks of Trotskyist dogmatism. By upholding such a statement we are likely to forget the political and economic background of Bengal. In Bengal there is a large number of peasantry which has not been satisfied with its lot since the days of Bengal settlement. These peasants were then very orthodox and slow to move in economic matters. Provincialism was strong among them. They could easily follow the lead of an eminent Bengalee if he praised Russia but they [illegible] treat with similar respect the sayings of the smaller [illegible] leaders. One of course excludes those who were already class conscious and formed the nucleus of the communist party.

The same is true of a large number of Bengal's city dwellers and the middle-class people.

These people as well as the peasants had been previously lulled into slumber by the philosophy of C.R. Dass who was by no means friendly towards Russia. It required a great leader of Tagore or Bose's standing to disenchant the Bengal people in this matter and give them the true message about Russia.

What about the message of Nehru ? Did the Bengal people hear it with the same respect with which they heard Tagore [illegible] this matter, however, we should avoid comparisons. Both were socialists and respected well in Bengal. Nehru had [illegible] himself to the Bengal people by his forward resolutions at [illegible] (some of the political pronouncements which he made [illegible] session, he was to disown later on) and the Bengal [illegible] that his economic programme was unmistakably clear and [illegible] to be followed. There was also a lot of confusion in Bengal about the economic doctrines of Motilal Nehru, who was by no means a socialist. He was respected much [illegible] as C.R. Dass was. But naturally this respect in [illegible] the Bengalees held him had its disadvantages. They were [illegible]

danger of being given a wrong lead in the economic matters by Motilal just as C.R. Dass had wrongly lead them. The younger Nehru by his timely intervention in Bengal affairs prevented this wrong from being done.

Whether the Swarajist Motilal ever forgave his son for meddling in areas predominantly "Swarajist" and turning them socialist "strongholds" is another matter.

The pundits of Hindu Sabha and the landlords of Bengal were not a little alarmed by Tagore's plain speaking. But their remorse did good to nobody. That the Bengal peasants were wide awake was proved by the fact that they were beginning to form kisan sabhas and to run them on socialist lines.

But the core of socialism is planning. It was here Nehru's genius excelled and a few years latter he initiated a big scheme of vast economic rehabilitation of the country. The national planning committee was a body of experts. Nehru with his science tripos of Cambridge and immense practical knowledge of work in the scientific and economic field proved to be of immense use to the committee, just as a politician he lent great importance to that body which without a front-rank politician at its helm would have been an assembly of armchair academicians. Tagore was not in this group of academician and politicians. This is important. But what could he do in this assembly.

He could only give it his moral support and see to it that the people of Bengal lent it full support. The Bengal Government with a not too enlightened ministry at its helm might have cold shouldered such a scheme, but could it do it and face an angry electorate carefully chaperoned by Tagore, the socialists and the communists in matter of scientific socialism and economic planning ? If Bengal had kept aloof from it, the Bengal peasant who though often a Muslim, has keen sense of his economic interests, could not tolerate it.

Outside India anxious people asked distinguished Indians travelling abroad as to what was going on in this vast sub-continent to rehabilitate the condition of the teeming millions. Tagore's literary engagements took him abroad, and whenever he spoke on Indian affairs, he was able to tell his audiences a thing or two about this huge experiment being carried on in India. Krishna Menon in England, Indian American League in America the associations of Indians in France, South-Eastern Europe,

China and Japan, re-echoed what he said.

Was it more important for Tagore or sit in National Planning Assembly meetings and air his little knowlege on scientific and economic issues, or was it better to become India's messenger abroad and tell the world that the Indians reputed for indolence had shaken off the effects of the paralysis and were now abreast of many countries in the sphere of planning ?

Doubtless the latter course was more fessible and also it was in fitness with the immense poetic talents of Tagore.

Nehru himself visited foreign countries and told the people there about the education of the Indian masses in socialism and the planning of the experts to uplift their conditions. But these engagements were necessarily brief though by no means less important than those of Tagore.

In fact since he spoke to the audience of M.P.'s and politicians in England or addressed political gatherings in Caxton Hall, he enlightened those people who were particularly interested in India and who as an electorote had immense power.

While Tagore's work falls in the missionary sphere Nehru's task was mainly political. Both wanted India to be lifted high in the esteem of the foreigners. Both spoke on like topics. But they had their own way of doing it. In the foreign countries the tide had begun to turn in favour of India. In democratic China, the communists and the left-wingers demanded that Indians should be given freedom to set their own house in order. If India could plan without much power having been vested in the central or provincial governments, it could certainly set up a large-scale socialist planning machinery to cope with the immense problems of the day. In Britain internationally known scientists like A.V. Hill, Haldane, Wells and William Beveridge taking their cue from the speeches of Nehru and Tagore, among others, demanded immediate action in India. Though it must be admitted that in some cases these Britons (Hill, Wells and Beveridge) wanted the retention of the British control in large measure. Similarly in America distinguished citizens associated themselves with the Indians' demand.

The social democratic M.P.'s in Britain are asking more questions in Parliament which reveal first-hand knowledge of Indian economic and political conditions supplied by the India League in Britain. In view of all this it seems certain that Indian

link-up with the socialist international (when it is formed once again after the war on the basis of socialist-communist unity) is certain. Previously the Indian objection to such a link-up was that the socialist-international was too little interested in Indian affairs, and also that it was not a professional body but reactionary. The communist international was considered too much extremist for the large Indian nationalist bloc in Congress. The combined socialist-communist international would easily parry such objections. In fact this link-up has already tak en place in the sphere of labour. The Indian labour is making common cause with the British and the American labour who the most part favour a link-up with the workers of U.S.S.R. There is a small but very noisy section of the workers in Bengal, which has trailed after the left-wing hirelings of M.N. Roy or the extremely cautious and sectarian Bengal labour party. These people may not wish to join the proposed international organisation of the socialists and the communists. They would be certainly recalcitrant and unwilling partners in a world link up of the forces of the workers, should they at all join such an organisation.

But they would do well to remember that Tagore, the international spokesman of the Bengal workers, was a champion of the Soviet Union and if he were alive he would favour India's participation in such an international organisation along with the progressive people of Britain, U.S.A., Soviet Russia, China, France and other countries. There is no doubt that in the long run the forces of the left in Bengal once they decide on such a course would succeed in satisfying the objections of the other labour partymen there and see to it that Bengal is no left behind when the question of the international solidarity of the workers arises. In the literary sphere too the Bengalee or for that matter the Indian *litterateurs* should also follow the example of Tagore. Happily it seems, in most cases, the progressive writers have lined up with their brother in foreign countries. There are very few who do not favour such a unity. But though this is true of the politically conscious writers there are some who still linger on in the nineteenth-century atmosphere of art for art's sake. This minority could not become a majority, perhaps in some cases such *litterateurs* are better left alone since they are not at all inclined to co-operate. But all the same effort should be made to enlist their co-operation. And what is more important the majority

The Chinese have also been the cause of the similar inspiration for the Bengal Poet.

They are one of the most ancient inhabitants of this world, with a record of civilisation second to none.

However, for some time past, at least for the last twenty years or so, they have faced constant wars.

Twenty years is a long period for internal and external wars. It leaves little time for artistic pursuits, such as poetry, fine arts, architect, civil engineering or production of fine books.

Then the reader would say the Chinese should be writen down as indifferent and pathetic to the affairs of other, and a people without much recent artistic or such achievements.

Is it so ? What about Lin Yutang, Anna May Wong and other artists and writers of China. No, China has time to think deeply about her affairs, of the world, even while the guns boom and cannons roar, and charred houses and debris-littered streets prevent the daily bringing out of a newspaper, the publication of a journal or the production of a book in conditions which we of peaceful countries consider as normal. The people of a country fighting a patriotic war of liberation can (as the British and the Russian example shows) turn out literature of the finest calibre, and read literature of the other peoples.

They have no doubt read all that Tagore on Nehru wrote as well as the people of this country have done. And they have made immense use of it.

Nehru's experiences about British role in India, Franco regime in Spain, the German Republic and the French Government proved of great help to them.

The Chinese have their own outstanding problems with Britain. They parted company with the city of London financiers as early as 1925, though not without some initial trouble and a good deal of breaking of heads on both sides. Nehru could give only occasional advice at that time as he was not much aware of the affairs of China. But as time passed, he advised the Chinese to study their relations with Britain on the basis of economic programme and formulate their policy accordingly. It was a question of imperialism *versus* the empty stomach and not a matter pertaining to racial antagonisms. Similar advice had been tendered by Lenin, but as he spoke from the communist pulpit, only communists or communist sympathisers in China heard what

he had to say. But in the case of Nehru all those who had suffered at the hands of imperialism listened to what he had to say.

For some time, whether out of war exigency or patriotism, the natiolist element in Kuomintang united with the communists and carried on the fight against the common enemy who practised uncommon brutality. However, now it seems the unity is ended, and a new chapter of discord is being written by the bellicose faction among the Kuomintang.

Now clearly, some of the Kuomintang leaders have forgotten the spirit and the letter of Nehru's writings, and they are ignoring his clear-cut analysis of the economic bases of imperialism in China.

The disaster in the internal politics of China has begun, and we have yet to bear the last of it. When China is torn asunder by internal war and destruction takes its heavy toll, then and not till, then, the nationalists would heed the words of Nehru.

Similarly, the Franco regime has been criticised by Nehru. He has written copiously about Spain, describing the civil war, the air raids on Barcelona, Valencia, Madrid, Malaga, the razing to the ground of San Sebastian, Guernica, Irun, the battles of Ebro, Teruel, Guadalajara, Guadaramma. He described how a country could get ready for surprise air attacks and defend itself from the demons of the air.

These were practical and eminently sensible schemes of A.R.P., and the Chinese benefited from it. Moreover, the comparison of Chungking and Madrid defences by Nehru was timely one; as the Chinese capital was experiencing some of the worst onslaughts of the Japanese air warfare. Chungking-dwellers in particular could benefit from Nehru's writings. Leaders of China have often and in terms befitting the position of Nehru paid hommage to the Indian leader and recognised the debt that they owe him. But it is only after the end of the China War that the true extent of this debt would be assessed; and then the Chinese would honour the Indian politician as they have honoured few foreign politicians in the past.

Take the instance of the German Republic. It was friendly to China. The Chinese press then honoured it. Then came the Nazi regime. The Chinese attitude towards it was in the beginning not unfriendly. In fact General Falkenyan stayed in China long after

the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war, and was recalled only when there were jitters in Tokyo Imperial Court circles and protests were telegraphed to Wilhelmstrasse to end this policy in China. The Wilhelmstrasse yielded before the Shogun Dynasty, just as the German Emperor had yielded and allowed German islands in the Pacific to become the Japanese strongholds. But even after the recall to the German general from China, Chungking's attitude towards Berlin was marked for its giddiness. China proclaimed itself hostile towards the Japanese fascism, but it hobnobbed with the German Nazis. No wonder the communists screamed anathemas against Chiang for this reason.

However, China needed to be corrected; and this role of the political menter was played by Jawaharlal Nehru. He reminded them of the Chinese loyalty towards the Weimar Republic, and the German love for China.

The feeling of love, argued Nehru, could exist only on the basis of ideological affinity. Since the core of the principles of the Weimar Republic was anti-imperialism, this identity between the two countries was understandable. But in the case of the Nazi Germany, why continue to treat it in the same way ? Why not end the anomaly of such relationship with Germany. It was this kind of trend of reasoning which ultimately prevented their statesmen from what seemed ro be political bankruptcy.

The French, like the British, have made use of their nearness to the Atlantic to expand fanwise in different directions of the world. They have in some cases lingered on in places, where they were least wanted, Indo-China is one such example. This country is a French problem, and it is a Chinese problem as well. The population is predominantly of Chinese origin, though Thais. Annamese and Burmese also abound. The French-speaking Indians form part of the population. The Chinese naturally want *Anschluss* with Indo-China, though it is amazing how they could carry on administration of such a vast land from the fringes of Siberia to Saigon and further up to Thai-Indo-China border. A solution of this problem would be Indo-China autonomy. But the French do not grant it.

Nehru has favoured liberation of Indo-China from the French yoke; hence the Chinese praise for him. What about Tagore ? What are his opinions on these so very important matters ? And how did the Chinese gain from him ?

First of all, let us take the British imperialism and the Japanese imperialism. Like Nehru, Tagore analysed the cause of China's poverty to be the imperialist domination of the other Powers. It seemed strange to him, how a country rich in internal resources could be reduced to such degrading poverty. He thought the Chinese to be poor; but not the 'mudfish' of Noguchi's writings. He treated them instead as human beings, with the same rights as any other people; and the same aspirations and ambitions. Nothing prevented him from giving a rough deal to the Japanese, if and when the Japanese really deserved it. Also he made it clear that whatever progress the Japanese had made, had not dimmed the glory of the ancient Chinese culture. The Chinese had achieved a level of civilisation in all respects, which the Japanese might well envy.

This comparison of the Chinese with the Japanese in so far as high level of civilisation was concerned made Tagore popular with the Chinese. They have never thought themselves to be inferior to the Japanese in any way, and Tagore's ideas stimulated their imagination and they could in several matters of technical progress come up to the Japanese level without feeling the shame of any inferiority complex.

Tagore was not a student of air warfare in Spain or elsewhere to instruct them in the matter of civil defence. He could not say how Chungking could be made impregnable. But he could certainly tell the Chinese a thing or two which could prove of immense advantage to them so far as their morale was concerned.

The British, he thought, had also their share in this giant carve-up in the East. This beings us to his theory of imperialism. It was not a Marxist theory. It was based on the belief which as a poet he took pains to nourish—that once science became of greater importance to people than art and beauty then the days of civilisation were numbered. He wanted the love of science and art to be harmoniously blended in human mind. He thought the Japanese and the Western Powers to be too much proud of their scientific achievements. This pride was the forerunder of the ambitions of imperialist expansion.

It is not clear how far this talk about the blending of art and science was mystical and how far it could be measured in the terms of reasoning as the civilised man understands it. Suffice

it to say that he had denounced imperialism, and in this he came very near to the philosophy of Nehru.

He could also describe the condition in India under imperial rule, but in this he could not like Nehru draw on personal experiences in the struggle for freedom. He could only say and with justice that if he as a poet could find such a large measure of response for his ideas of socialism and freedom among the population of the country, then surely the Chinese politicians and *literati* could in a similar way prepare their country for its struggle, and give its people the sorely needed education in scientific socialism. Tagore was himself in the beginning an idealist socialist, but towards the end of his life he veered more and more towards scientific socialism.

As has been pointed out, Tagore could not instruct the Chinese in the Spanish method of civil air defence, as he had never visited Spain, and could not be expected to be as well acquainted with it as Nehru. But he had great sympathy with the struggle for freedom carried on by the Republican Armies of Spain in Europe. This sympathy could be a source of moral encouragement to the Chinese.

About the German Republic, Tagore had great sympathy with it. He had witnessed the two German administrations, the pre-Hitler and Hitler period. He liked the former, though he did not like the latter. Like Nehru, he cemented the relations between Republican China and Republican Germany. And when the Hitlerite administration came he saw to it that the Chinese detested it. He was not happy about Chiang Kai-Shek's association with the German fascist military clique.

This is not to say that he was indifferent to certain qualities of the German people, just as he praised the Japanese people as distinguished from their Government; similarly he praised the German nation and wished it would get rid of the Hitlerite clique.

The French administration in the East was included by him in the category of imperialist rule; which he wanted to be ended. He visualised a China which could embrace all the predominantly Chinese areas (those countries which were geographically part and parcel of the greater China).

Indo-China was a principally Chinese country; and there was no reason why it should not have *Anschluss* with China; if it so

chose. It could alternately become an autonomous state. These then were the main points of agreement between Tagore and Nehru about China. It would be observed that there was a goodish measure of harmony between them on this subject than even on the subject of socialism (in which matter there was harmony only after Tagore's visit to Russia and even then the Poet did not become a member of any spcialist organisation or actively aid the cause of socialism).

But in spite of such great indentity of interests between the two leaders in the matter of China, it was not always possible to co-ordinate their activities.

Tagore had visited China in the middle twenties, when the sparks of civil war seemed to consume the very existence of that country and then leave its face charred beyond recognition.

He repeated his visit after the Manchurian debacle, and when the Japanese struck treacherously near Marco Polo Bridge on July 7, 1937; then he sent a message to Chiang Kai-Shek which was a sort of warning to the Nippon just as the quarantine speech of Roosevelt in 1937 warned the Axis countries to play the game fair and desist from disturbing the peace of the world. Thereafter, we find that in 1939 and 1940 he, along with other distinguished citizens of Bengal, re-echoed the sentiments expressed by him previously.

In the same period Nehru's activities were :

1925—28
He associated himself with relief work of medical aid to war-torn China.

1929
Inaugural addıess at the Lahore Congress favouring a closer identity of interests with the Chinese.

1933-34
Denunciation of Japan in his autobiography and open support for China. A copious documentary proof of his pro-freedom sentiments so far as the Far East is concerned.

1935—37
Repeated denunciations of the Japanese. Withdrawal of

affiliation from the Indian Congress Committee in Japan. Boycott of the Japanese goods sent to India. Protests from Consul-General in Calcutta.

1938-39.
Visit to the Chinese theatres of war such as Chungking, Yunnan, Changsha, Lashio. Denunciation of Japan as aggressor in Congress war manifesto.

1940
The above denunciation repeated in many speeches.

1941—42
Pearl Harbour outrage condemned. Common front of freedom-loving people in the Far East proposed. Britain asked to expedite aid to China, so as to prevent complete breakdown of the machinery of administration.

It is clear the two men quite often issued statements about China independently of each other, and visited that country with their own particular assoceiates rather than going there together. But it is not difficult to see when the collaboration was very close. In 1925—27 the aid-China policy brought the two men together. In 1929 Tagore backed up Nehru as the coming man of India and thus *ipso facto* dotted the i's and crossed the t's of the 'Free Asia' speech.

In 1933-34 period he spoke against Japan while Nehru was locked behind the bars, In 1935--37 he backed the policy of boycott of the Japanese goods. He spoke frequently against Japan in 1938-39 and in 1939 he associated himself with Congress manifesto against the Axis.

Thus often there was active collaboration and co-ordination of activities of the two men, and when there was not co-ordination the spirit and the letter of their speeches or writings about China differed little from each other.

Would it not have been better if the two had established greater liaison with each other ?

This is hardly the time to ask that question. When the sum-total of their activities showed that startling results had been achieved in matter of aid to China one should not bother about factual collaboration in all cases. The Chinese have yet to show

that they could do for India, what Tagore and Nehru have done together for China.

The stress in both cases was same and according to the law of strees and strain, the strain which each of them employed was hardly different. There was difference sometimes, in approach to the problem, The philosophical background of Tagore's approach to China was humanism, while Nehru calculated in the terms of political front of two countries against the twin evils imperialism and fascism. To sum up it was like Gorki and Litvinov's attitude towards Britain or China (or for that matter any other country of the world). The two Russians, both internationalists, could hardly step in each other's shoes. Nor could they collaborate in details as Molotov and Litvinov do.

Similar was the attitude of Tagore and Nehru towards China. The goal was the same. Means often same. Stress and strain same. But the angle from which the two approached the problem was not same always. This should however not make any difference to the Chinese—our neighbours since the dawn of history.

IV

INTERNATIONALISM

From love of China, internationalism is a stepping stone. Napoleon's statement "when China moves it would move the world" is extremely pointed in this case. To China have come also the civilised people of the world Germans, Britons, Irishmen, Indians, Japanese, Spaniards, Frenchmen, Italians, Russians, Swedes and Dutchmen. Many of them went as traders, yet others as engineers and builders; some as colonial rulers, some as international experts of the League of Nations. Also went to China-Indian coolies and the Japanese desperadoes whether in military services or as dope-pedlars.

If so many races meet together in China, it is no wonder that thinking of the Chinese problem, one begins to think of the world problem. Both Nehru and Tagore used China as a stepping stone to their internationalism. This country helped them to formulate their international theories. Their own country also helped them. India has always thought of the wide world as the centre of her interests, though it must be confessed that quite often

Indians inspired with such zeal never looked beyond the limits of Asia.

Tagore and Nehru looked beyond the geographical limits of Asia because they saw that like China, many European races had co-mingled in India, and as if, by such action, made it necessary for enlightened Indians to take interest in them, and in their countries of origin. Travel had also made them internationalists.

Family education in liberal or liberal scientific tradition also tended to encourage this belief.

We have compared the Indian leaders with Gorki and Litvinov in the matter of their attitude towards China.

This is all very well so far as that country is concerned. But in the sphere of broad international affairs do the above two leaders answer to the description of Gorki and Litvinov, the Russian leaders, who became world leaders ?

Obviously no. For one, scientific socialism or Marxism was always the guiding spirit of Litvinov or Gorki's ideas. In some cases the Soviet writers might have thought in terms of brotherhood of writers and artists (Marxist or non-Marxist) of all countries. Sometimes too, the Russian statesman may have acted in terms of liberal politics of other countries—playing the game of the liberal statesmen of Europe. However this does not belie the fact that Marxism moved the two men in their international attitude.

In philosophy, humanism itself is part of that term which goes by the name of 'idealist philosophy'. However, in practice sometimes one has to abandon the intensely narrow application of philosophical terms--when, as in case of Nehru and Tagore, we find two men pursuing same ends from two different angles.

In case of Nehru, as the China example shows, the anti-fascist and anti-imperialist motives were the main 'switch levers' which acted as 'open sesame' to his international world. Quite often he was as much humanist as Tagore and took the stand that man had certain inherent rights, and these, if they were violated by someone else, necessarily called for action in support of the aggrieved person. All right-thinking persons, who had even an iota of sympathy with him should aid him. For Tagore man's inherent rights were the main 'switch levers' which opened into his international world. He often called mysticism and

poetic emotionalism to his aid and later, like Nehru, made it a point to (sometimes) have a go at the imperialists and the fascists.

Does this adherence to idealism intermingled with Marxism or humanism make much difference so far as the advancement of the international cause is concerned ? Obviously it does. Nehru's idealism, whatever its faults, involved action in support of his ideas.

Tagore's humanism often involved no action, and it was for the most part a moral condemnation of the wrong-doer. But here again we are in danger of interpreting the 'action' too narrowly. In point of fact strong-willed internationalists like Tagore as distinct from pacifists were always prepared to go to any length, should the world opinion so decide. They were for 'moral sanctions' so long as there was not enough backing for military sanctions. But if all internationalists backed military sanctions, such humanists fell in line with the majority decision, and enthusiastically welcomed it. Internationalists are not in majority in the world that there should be any such factionalism among them. They form a minority and such differences as between Tagore and Nehru do not count and should not be counted.

For purpose of discussion, however, we can clear up this humanist idealist imbroglio by saying that if comparisons are to be made, then let Nehru be called Benesh of internationalism, while Tagore answers to the description of either Tolstoy or Karl Kapek—the Czech writer.

Both the Czech leaders thought the interests of their country to be as important as service of the internationalist cause. It was not a narrow-minded nationalism. Hedged on in all sides by powerful neighbours and having been wronged by the Germans, the Poles, the Hungarians, the Austrians and the Russians (the Czarist mercenaries), the Czechs after the last war were naturally cautions. They wanted their suspicions to be removed, and today when they have no longer any fears from the Russians, they still want assurance of safety from their other neighbours. This, leaving aside Germany, would be no doubt forthcoming.

Is it any different from similar fears about Britain and America as well as Japan, which find strong expression in the writings of Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru ? Have

not these men feared the predatory (not so much in case of America, where only a section of Wall Street capitalists is imperialist-minded) claims of the three Powers ? Do they not want security against them, and have they not like Benesh and Kapek felt reassured about the U.S.S.R. and found comfort in having such a friendly neighbour ?

Nehru has not attended any session of the League of Nations as plenipotentiary of his country nor for that matter has he attended the meetings statesmen where peace problems are thrashed out. He has had not much experience of constructive statesmanship. Benesh had all this. And yet could one familiar with utterances of both lay his hand on the heart and say that Nehru has been any less friendly towards the rights of the small Powers as the Czehoslovak leader ? Tagore has not acquired that popularity in Europe as a writer, which has gone to make the name of Kapek so familiar in European bookshops and literary circles as well as the homes of the working class and the intelligentsia, where he is read with not an undeserved pride. But he is not less outspoken in matter of the rights of the smaller Powers than Karl Kapek.

Among these Powers one includes Czechoslovakia, which always found in Tagore and Nehru a great admirer of its cause. Nehru's writings abound in graphic references to Czechoslovokia and he often lifted his voice to render all possible aid to that victim of German barbarism and Teutonic savagery.

Tagore also issued appeals on behalf of Czechoslovakia. Both these men helped to find jobs for Czech refugees in India.

Nehru's paper *National Herald* and Tagore's mouthpiece *Modern Review* both proved immensely useful in this matter. The latter paper often published graphic accounts of Czechoslovakia and illustrations accompanied these accounts. To be fair to the Czechs, the latter also played prominent part in mobilising the world opinion on the side of the Indians. Both the Czech Foreign Minister and President Edward Benes or Benesh and Karl Kapek were prominent advocates of Indian freedom.

This exchange of freedom greetings between the Indians and the Czechs was a happy feature of the internationalism of Tagore and Nehru, but it was not by itself enough.

What else could be done ? If it was not possible to get India well represented at the League of Nations, then there were

other institutions such as I.L.O. which could be bolstered up and encouraged by these two men. That to be sure they did. They wanted the I.L.O. to take up such problems as child labour, the woman labour, and the badly paid labours in India. Tagore was particularly worried about the condition of Assam tea farm coolies, the miners in the coalfields of Jharia and Jamshedpur, the jute-workers and the Tata factory workers who were quite often at loggerheads with the management. In his novels he had depicted such coolies coming to cities from villages, and leading a life of semi-starvation or starvation.

And the horrible tasks that women labourers had to perform were utterly revolting to his good sense.

He knew that in many countries the conditions were as bad or even worse, and that was why he sponsored international action to end the horrible condition of the slave-labour in India.

Tagore was not unaware of the condition of the labourers outside Bengal. In Punjab, U.P., Bombay and Madras it was the same story. International action alone could end this miserable state of affairs. Nehru, the socialist, similarly wanted the I.L.O. to take the matter in its hands and act speedily. He also saw to it that as far as it lay within their power, the Congress ministries did whatever they could to end the rotten state of affairs in working-class districts.

Closely allied to this international problem of the workers was the problem of the welfare of women. This matter was taken up by the All-India Women's Conference just as the workers' problems fell within the purview of the Trade Union Congress. But Tagore and Nehru, like the women leaders, Sarojini Naidu,' Vijaylaxmi Pandit and Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya, thought that it was an international matter and one deserving attention of the League of Nations Therefore, he sponsored international moves to end traffic in women and children.

Similarly Nehru, whose sister is a leading feminist of India, a Mrs. Pankhurst in her own way, has associated himself with the life-task of his sister.

Mandates and colonies also form part of huge plan of human welfare which devolved on the League. In these mandated territories it has not been always possible for the British and the French administrations to grant elementary human rights to

people inhabiting these territories, with the result that there has been increasing demand for the establishment of autonomy. Indians, who in some cases form quite a large group of the population in these areas, have backed up these demands. Another instance of such agitation is provided by those countries where Indians do not live. Palestine is one such country. Here the Indian sympathies have been forthcoming.

Closely allied to this mandated territory problem is that of territories, where mandated rule has been (in recent times) deliberately foisted on the people. One such example is the Italian thrust in Abyssinia, which has been since then hurled back on the Italians themselves and has hit them like a boomerang.

In the case of Africa, Zanzibar, Palestine and Abyssinia, the two Indian leaders sponsored the freedom movement.

Drug and dope peddling was the other evil which had to be combated internationally. As a first step to this move prohibition was introduced in Congress provinces. Tagore favoured it. Nehru aided it. As-considerable part of India consists of its peasants who have taken to drugs and narcotics like their prototypes in China of ten years ago, and in Russia of the Czars (*vodka* was drunk in Russia by the peasants as much as the coarse wine was used in India), the evil had to be stopped and the peasants educated to shun it if socialism was to have any meaning. Hence, the speeches of Tagore and Nehru in favour of prohibition, and the stress laid by them on this aspect of the peasant welfare.

Cultural co-operation is another way of fostering international co-operation. What constitutes cultural co-operation between nations ? We have seen that both Nehru and Tagore as writers sought contact with foreign writers; as a means of fraternisation—that foreign publicity aided them in their tasks. But was this by itself sufficient ? Could mere contact with foreign writers be termed as cultural co-operation ? It is no doubt a milestone on the road to international co-operation, but not enough by itself.

What else is required ? Interchange of cultural missions, consisting not only of the writers, but educationists, and literary critics, the publishing experts and to give it a democratic touch, a group of citizen readers. These missions (whether they are sent from India to Russia, Britain, China, Australia or America on reciprocal basis) could prove of immense use in fostering feeling

of amity and at the same time lead to progress of art and literature.

Nehru and Tagore's visits to foreign countries were often actuated by such ideas. It is on record that Tagore's Santiniketan professors and his close journalist friends such as Kalidas Nag often accompanied him in his foreign visits. Of course, the Poet was not a specialist in all branches of literature or cultural affairs and, therefore, he had to be chaperoned by these men just as he chaperoned them in some branches of literary activity in which he was a specialist. They also studied such matters as music, painting, languages, etc., and came back to enrich Santiniketan and Sriniketan with their experiences. They also contributed articles in paper and in this way enriched the journalist world.

Foreign newspapermen, journalists, authors, art academies, science institution, etc., benefited from their presence similarly. They came to know more about India and respected the cultural progress of this country more and more.

In case of Nehru, of course, be it said that such formidable array of experts never accompanied him. He was mainly a politician. His missions were political but, all the same, sometimes when he had time and interest, he took the opportunity to establish cultural relations with foreign countries too. Men of science, and men of art, of other countries met him just as they met Tagore.

Quite often it so happened that men of letters of other countries visited India. Sometimes they met Tagore and Nehru, and on these occasions they were taken round to India's cultural centres and shown what progress had been achieved by India in this matter.

This was of course a beginning, and a very small one at that time. Progress in this direction could be made in the way suggested above. That contains a broad outline of the plan to foster international amity by establishing cultural relations between the various countries of the world. And once we have the cultural relations as above, then there could be similar relations in various other matters—for instance, liaison in technical matters could be established by the groups of workers and engineers visiting such countries on reciprocal basis. There is no doubt that Nehru has such a plan in view, for as one of the chief sponsors of the committee called 'Friends of the Soviet Union'

he has made efforts to establish relations of cultural co-operation with the U.S.S.R. This relationship would no doubt progress well, and the 'Friends of the Soviet Union' take it upon themselves to foster more and more cultural relations with Russia in every conceivable way.

In matter of China Nehru's interest has not flagged either. The visit of the Chiangs was harbinger of such cultural relationship. Now more could be done in this matter too.

Tagore leaves behind a legacy to us, and we have not only to cherish it dear, for the sake of the departed leader; but also to make use of it in all directions. Would we do that or would we sit and twiddle our thumbs while the rich wealth of other nations' culture remains a remote thing for us and our own wealth in this matter is not by any means accessible to them (Except through normal channels of the book trade. The bookseller is a friend of culturs. But it is not enough to make him a cultural representative in other countries. He is necessarily a commercial man and could serve the cause of international cultural relationship only in part).

It seems Tagore's institutions, Santiniketan and Sriniketan, could play an important part in this matter. They were the beacons of light and learning guiding the India-bound foreign travellers. They came, rested only to return back to their countries richer in experience. They pooled their intellectual resources with those who were responsible for the administration of Santiniketan and Sriniketan.

The two institutions should even now carry forward that tradition. Thus, could the international co-operation in educational, technical (including mechanisation and engineering, all branches) and cultural matters be encouraged and the veil that surrounds other countries and our own effectively lifted up.

Once cultural liaison has been established (or even before that) the bases of political liaison are also laid, and interchange of political missions between the nations, similar to the cultural missions, could also take place. In case of this latter aspect of the international problem, these institutions could count on the support of Nehru, the politician, who would of course willingly give it. Then the days of complete amity between one nation and the other are not far off.

V

LOVE OF POETRY

This bid for increased world co-operation between one nation and another in matter of cultural progress and educational uplift, on part of Nehru and Tagore, necessarily brougnt about a change in their attitude towards poetry. They studied poetry with greater gusto, but now, it was clear to them that poet had to play an unique role in building up the world order of today. In the beginning they had tried to cultivate love of poetry in conjunction with love of politics. That was a welcome move. But it was internationalism, which was to give as it were, a finishing touch to their schooling in poetry. Internationalism moulded their poetic selves in the right cast. It seemed that when they looked at the world affairs there was a sense of realism in their attitude which other Marxists might envy. After all how many people there are outside the Marxist fold who love poetry and yet talk sense, when it comes to international co-operation. For most non-Marxist poets their own world represents the limit of internationalism. There are others who could not get over the effects of their secular education and when talking about internationalism implied by that term a narrow religious philosophy limited to certain countries. Did this internationalism encourage Rabindranath Tagore to write internationalist poetry or Jawaharlal Nehru to read it ?

There are traces in the last poems of Tagore such as the *Fruit Gathering* which show obvious signs of the new trend. They are in support of peace—not peace at any price--but peace with honour.

Nehru has so far not given the world any literary of political work comparable in magnitude to the *Autobiography.* Now that he has come out of the prison, he would give us some such work and then we will be able to know his latest poetic trends but not till then. Perhaps this time we will get many more quotations of poets—this is mere speculation—one cannot know it, and if he does not quote poets, his actions would be the best guide. Necessarily without those actions the progress of internationalism in this country and elsewhere would remain incomplete.

His poetic trends are of interest to the world. But even

without any obvious change in those trends, one might expect him to do something in nature of practical politics to help the cause dear to his heart.

In our own times people are not only interested in poetry, but also in the personality of the poet and his usefulness to the world, is what in the last resort counts.

So far as Tagore's poetry is concerned, the world has got all or practically all of it before them. Now it is for the Indian poets to follow his international trends, just as one expects them (following Tagore's lead) to have contacts with foreign writers and promote cultural and intellectual co-operation between various countries of the world. Here, of course, it may be pointed out that after the Poet's death it may be difficult to find similar poets in India, and distinct from the writers of prose, who could carry forward the tradition of internationalism of Tagore. There is of course Sarojini Naidu. There is another poetes of internationalist views. Her name is Miss Bharti Sarabhai. These are the examples among the poets of India and there may be (not so well-known) a few others of their way of thinking.

Sarojini Naidu is the right person to do team work with Nehru in this matter, and cultivate among the intelligentsia the habit of reading the right kind of poetry. In this task, too, they can count on the support of the admirers of Tagore in India. She is a good internationalist, but not a socialist like Nehru. But it seems in this matter she could effectively (with Nehru's collaboration) carry on the cultural and political tradition of the late Poet.

VI

TRAVEL

Tagore and Nehru were both fond of travel. Gifted with the restless of the poet and the broad humanitarian ideas of the international socialist, the two leaders frequently went out to know more about the unknown lands, and to see that which had so far eluded their eyes, but about which they had read a lot, and which had tickled their senses.

Whither were they bound and which were the lands which fascinated these two, when they set out first (as most of us do) as knight-errants in the political world and the literary world ?

Leaving aside Nehru's early foreign education, which has been at length discussed in the previous chapters, we find that Tagore was the earlier traveller. His outstanding visit in those days was to Europe. He had been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. What did he see in Europe then ? He saw the dynastic monarchies saddled with power for good (so it seemed then). Where these monarchies had democratic system to support it, the future was less bleak; but where absolutism remained in power, the seeds of decay had been sown, and Europe was in none too good state.

At that time Tagore admired the great achievements of Europe, but pointed out with becoming courage that Asia had a hopeful message to give. He noted with deserved satisfaction that the people of Asia were refreshingly free from war mania of all kinds. Was it true ? Was it not a fact that the Japanese, secret and conspiring, always had their plans cut and dried wanted to push their knife into the back of Germany and benefit from the European war to build up their own power in the East ?

Very true. This was going on behind the closed doors in the Japanese foreign office, the imperial palace or the secret meetings of the secret Dragon Societies. Japan was arming to expel European interests from the East. Having delivered the blow against Russia, it wanted to deliver the next against Germany, and thus make its position safe.

But how was any one to know what the intentions of the secretive Nippon were ? Even the big Powers did not know anything about this matter. How could the individuals know these affairs ?

Later on in 1916-17, when Tagore visited Japan, he told the people there that reckless authoritarianism had saddled itself in power and held sway among the people. They had to get rid of this imperialism to breathe as free men.

This was a very bold talk that the Japanese got from him. It was distinctly the result of his experiences gained in the previous European and American tours. If he had not visited Europe and America, could he compare the conditions in these countries with Japan ? He could not do that. He could then neither praise the good points of Japan nor criticise its bad ones.

The Japanese were in certain matters advanced than some Europeans, but in most worst than barbarians.

This ugly truth had to be held up before them and they were to be shown the mirror in their face. Only the hardened European traveller could do that. A simple poet (if Tagore were that, which he was not) would have become involved in emotional tangle about the good qualities of the Japanese and forgotten to give them a dressing-down which they richly deserved. A merely nationalist political poet would have sung the hymns about the new spirit in Japan and made the same mistakes as the non-political poet (the existence of such a person was not unlikely in that society, but in our own all poets are more or less inclined towards one party or the other) and if anything improved on him he would have carried on this march into the blind man's alley. Tagore was an internationalist poet. Therefore, he avoided such mistakes.

However, then the spotlight was focussed more on Europe than on Japan in the Far East. What did the Poet think of Europe ? We have observed that he warned Europe in 1913 against the impending war. Could he repeat this warning now ? How could he do that ? How could he cross the submarine-infested ocean and reach the heart of the war-torn Europe, and make an appeal to the belligerents to end the war, and strive for freedom, peace and progress. The Atlantic was no more free from raids then than it is today. Tagore went to America, and there told the people that the war in Europe must end soon, and the democratic rights of the man be honoured and respected.

The Americans heard this distinguished visitor to their country with respect and not only praised his speeches but also poems. America soon went to war to end war in Europe. Wilson re-echoed Tagore's sentiments, but Wilson's ideas remained paper schemes. They were never translated into action.

Tagore returned home hopeful about the average American's interest in the cause of freedom but disgusted with the way the peace politics were handled in America and Europe.

The foreign visits were repeated by Tagore in 1921. By then the storm in Europe had subsided. Peace had come, but what a shrivelled-up, emasculated ghost of peace it was ! In America at that time they called a naval conference which recognised Japan's right to have navy and maintain it at the ratio of 5 : 5 : 3 to that of England and America. This meant rearmament with all the great ferocity that the nations so inclined were capable of.

Following the great Powers' example the Germans began

secretly to arm the *Reichswehr*. Was this surprising to Tagore? Why should it surprise him? Did he become pessimistic and rage Cassandra-like about the future of mankind? No. He was not an emotional poet. He could not do that. He had foreseen that rearmament plans would begin to operate soon. When he spoke in Tokyo and New York in 1916-17, he foresaw this age when science would become the monster instead of being the servant of man.

Then he wrote a series of articles in the *Modern Review* and other papers elaborating his previous pleas for peace. It was tragic that the statesmen of Europe and America ignored these pleas. Soon the peril was to become clear.

1921-25 were the years of restlessness for the Poet. The visit to China in 1925 was actuated as much by the love for the Chinese as the desire to find in travel an outlet for his restlessness.

What he felt about China politically has been described previously. At the moment we are concerned more with the tourist than with the politician in the Poet. Not that he sacrificed either interests or considered one more important than the other.' In fact he blended both the interests and sought not only to establish the cause of peace in China but also to find peace for his own tired mind.

How much had China changed since the ten years which had lapsed between his previous visit and the present one? Much.

China, where Tagore travelled first, was passing through chaos resultant of the end of the Ming Dynasty. There was not much to see in it except for the fact that a resolute band of republicans battled their way forward against heavy odds.

Ten years later, the flag of the republic hoisted by Sun-Yat-Sen and Chiang Kai-Shek fluttered high. Many new sites had been built including National University and Military Academy. Shanghai, Peeking, Canton, Hankow and Nanking were all remodelled. Most of the modern areas of these cities, since then in part destroyed by the Japanese, were built after the year 1921. Fine factories and settlements around them were built by the Americans, the British, the Germans, the Russians, the Swedes and the Italians. It was not for nothing that these people wanted to strick to the original rights. These 'rights' meant their high standard of living which frankly speaking was much higher than the European settlers could ever dream of in their own countries.

China gave them beautiful modern homes, ownership of steamers, lands and factories. They had this and they had girls to cherish dear. And they threw it all away—this golden opportunity to fraternise with the people of the East who had made possible their high standard of living.

Tagore saw all this. He met China's rulers and leaders, and he came to know more about the European settlers in China. He also visited Malaya, Burma, Siam and the Indies. Everywhere he saw the same change. New hopes filled the hearts of the people. They were changing, but those who adopted an attitude of belated superiority towards them stood where they were. They had not moved forward. They wanted to hold what they had.

Next time when Tagore went to China, instead of this struggle there was another one—with the Japanese. It was more grim, and bloodshed on both sides took a heavy toll. He saw young China in grips with the last of the Eastern potentates. He did love to see the result of this combat, though today it seems to be a foregone conclusion. In Tagore's time it was not. The tussle went on as it did in 1925, with foreign vested interests, and we knew on which side his sympathies lay. However, though he did not see the triumph of the Young China, as we see it today, we note from his writings that sometimes he was under that pessimistic mood which disturbed him after 1921, and which he sought to end by his visit to China in 1925. He was almost driven to believe that China migh be dismembered. He did not realise that the treacherous Japanese would sign their own death warrant by attacking Britain and America.

In 1939 and 1940 travellers to the Far East reported certain Japanese war against the Western Powers. If Tagore had gone out then, his pessimism would have ended, and he would have been (like other travellers) filled with the new hopes about the forces ranged against Nipponian absolutism. His last year's writings about Japan should not however confuse the real issue—even then he cried death to Japanese fascists. He knew they had risen by sword, and would fall by sword. The fact that the end of that fascism did not come soon made him impatient. About the end itself there could not be any doubt.

But we need not view the travels of Tagore only in the background of the various changes that had taken place in China in

1915, 1925 and 1935. There were other places besides the Far-East which the Bengal Poet Leader visited. He visited America too, and found a considerable swing towards peace, socialism and economics of abundance and the rest of the ideas which find a ready haven in a liberal democratic society. Communism was also less offensive to America's political Mrs. Grundies, Aunt Sallies and Mr. Dolittles. There were noticeably fewer Negro lynchings, and the Chinese and Indians were not treated with that distant courtesy which was relaxed only when visitors like Tagore or Vivekananda or such persons made their appearance. These people were respected for different reasons and even (not unusual feature of life there) without understanding them. It is doubtful if the philosophy of Vivekananda is understood there even then, as that gentleman is very obtuse to his countrymen even in spite of the fact that many respect him.

Tagore's poetry (especially political poetry) was understood later on, and in the thirties this Poet was as familiar to them as Upton Sinclair, Eugenie o' Neil, Mrs. Christie, Dorothy Thompson, Walter Lipmann and Archibaid Macleish. Tagore no doubt enjoyed it, just as he enjoyed the symptuous dinners given in his honour by his followers and the gatherings in Madison Square Gardens. Whether he was in society at New York is not known. We do not know whether any parties were given to him in the Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street. Perhaps some literary-minded woman there—an American Eleanor Smith or Mrs. Van Der Elst—world give the would her memoirs and throw light on the way American societies received Tagore. So far we only know that the Poet had good audiences there in the thirties as earlier, and many a party was given in his honour. The Indians vied with Americans to respect him; he gave them in return some advice, which they might cherish dear. He told how best they could lie abroad, and keep the dignity of their country intact. He was not much enamoured of the activities of the intensely nationalist Sikh coolies who had gone there. These people were not all wrong. But they were often wrong. They did some very crude things while there and worked in conditions which seem to us today very shocking. The result of which was that there was visible deterioration of respect for the Indians in America. Came racial legislation and counter-moves in India which acerbated relations of the two great and friendly peoples. Tagore would have been pleased if

before the American racial legislation, the Government of India had voluntarily recalled these coolies and compensated them with constructive jobs in India. By not doing that they made these people rabid nationalists and prevented their becoming class-conscious proletariat. But as things were, he was not pleased with these people. This is not to say that he was unsparing in his criticism about the legislative measures in America. He was not a lawyer, only a casual visitor, who loved America, and linked to be there. But he was shocked as any citizen visiting the States then would be.

The Americans, fore long, debarred these people from enjoying the rights of citizenship which they had no doubt well earned. If repatriation was not possible, and either the Indian administration or these people themselves did not desire it then they were entitled to the rights of citizenship. The American legislation was not aimed at any particular section of the Indian population. But against all. They were rushing headlong into legislation. If they had appointed a committee to enquire into the grievances which the Indians and Americans had against each other, then these citizens (who offended either party) could be dealt with by the committees of the two nationalities. This was the democratic method, and one which could find approval of Tagore, the critic of racial legislation—but friend of Indians and Americans inhabiting the land known as the United States of America.

Indians and Americans in America today, when the Democratic Congress has done the democratic thing—if they have any respect for they Bengal and the Indian Leader—should follow his advice and form committee to solve their own problems—as problems these must be in the beginning when people coming from different countries settle down at one place.

France is another country which was often visited by Tagore. We have seen what his attitude was towards the French-Chinese problem in Indo-China. A similar attitude was adopted by him in other matters too pertaining to the problems of the French Empire.

In Paris he was as well received as in New York. The society circles as well as ths politicians, scientists and men of letters gathered together to meet him. Of course, there were necessarily some who were not lovers of poetry and who did not understand

what he wrote, except for his internationalist poems. But these people were few in France as in America—they were becoming fewer as the time went on. The citizens in the modern world everywhere except those circles, where fantastic oriental poetry is appreciated, do not waste time on poets whom they do not understand. Just as they would send an M.P. or politician packing home, if he did not satisfy them; similarly they treated the poet who did not satisfy them. Out he went of the literary circle and was forgotten. There was no oriental mysticism in respecting him, though of course in case of Tagore he did write often oriental mystical poetry. This was pointed out to him wherever his friends wanted to correct him. If the *Paris Soir La Humainite*, *Europe Nouvelle*. *Verdi* and *Echo de Paris* praised him, they were quick to point out his defects too.

Romain Rolland, Pertinax and Genevieve Tabious were his friends as well as critics, more friends than critics. The *Academie Francais* admitted him. They heard him, they respected him. They told him in which respects, they were in need of him, and in which particular matter he need to be corrected.

And when the drinks in these Parisian literary gatherings were consumed and the courses of meals finished, the Poet with his companions walked the banks of Seine, or passed near the Champs Elysees, the Paris Boulevards or the Notre Dame Cathedral, wondering whether he was not fortunate among the people of the East—some of them enslaved, others being beaten black and blue in the streets of Damascus, in Algeria, Morocco, Tunis, Indo-China, Shanghai and Canton by Frenchmen, filled with excess of pride of scientific achivements—to get this honour from the very Frenchmen. And he was also modest enough to think over his own shortcomings and find the way to end them. But somehow, such is the force of habit in men of Tagore's class, that he continued to write mystical poetry, and of course the French continued to forget the objects for which Danton, Robespierre, Saint-Just, Napoleon, Lious Napoleon and Lious Phillipe lived—they foreget the ideals of the Paris commanders. The Empire of the Friench is much worse ruled than any other countries held in subjection of the foreign Powers. France is liberated, French Empire is not. Frenchmen love Tagore. He has reached a place where he could not improve on his poetry. They can improve on his ideas in the sphere of politics, art,

literature, i.e., where his ideas are sensible ! Would they do that ? Charles de Gaulle is a distinguished politician, a soldier and a good European. He is the core of the French front *populair* as Daladier was not and as Blum was not. He has yet to show he is much different from them. But what concerns us most is that he is a distinguished writer too. Does he like Tagore ? We do not known about his poetic taste. He may.

But other Frenchmen lesser placed than him know Tagore as well as they do Lamartiane, Balzac or Sacha Guitry, and France by the way is not ruled by Charles de Gaulle but by Frenchmen. Would the Frenchmen wait for a lead in this matter or would they act telling their leaders what to do ? If the French do not act on Tagore's advice so far as their Empire is concerned, one might as well say that the time they spent on entertaining Tagore was wasted, and that good gentleman who is now no more made a mistake in visiting France. He could go there incognito, if at all.

Britain was also visited by Tagore in his European travels. He was received there, much as elsewhere, Here again we do not know whether he was in society or not. but there is no doubt that distinguished, men in the world of art and science visited him; critics like Edward Thompson, James Agate, Howard Spring, John Hilton and Desmond MacCarhy were among these people.

However as in France and America, so in Britain the Poet-Statesmen, while paying due attention to the literary matters, had to make some observations about the subject of Empire relationship. He was not satisfied with the literary receptions while millions starved in India. In fact these receptions irritated Tagore, for he had to feel on every occasion that his country was not being given a square deal.

Tagore visited Italy, Germany, Austria and the Balkan countries too. He saw the noted buildings in Rome, Venice, Genoa, etc.; but he did not forget the horrible figure of the Il Duce, whom even Michael Anglo could paint only as a figure in Dante's interno. We find him dead set against fascism of the sawdust Caesar. He criticised in his travels just as he criticised the mistakes of the other states which he visited.

This brings us to the other leader of the anti-fascist party—Jawaharlal Nehru. What were his travels ?

Nehru visited almost all the places which Tagore had visited

—all except one or two such as America. Of course he did not go to China in 1916-17 and later in 1925. Perhaps he missed to see those memorable events which might have inspired him—great political writer that he is—to write the story of the heroic efforts of the Chinese to build up their nation following the three principles of Sun-Yat-Sen, Perhaps, he would sometimes go again to China with this end in view and write more about China. Here we should pause to point out that when he went to China in 1939, he stayed there for a brief period, and wrote the impressions of his visit, which for their clarity and literary precision equal the best that Pearl Buck, Edgar Ansel Mowrer and Edgar Snow have written about that vast sub-continent, Whatever there was important about the political aspects of his China visit has been written in the previous chapters. Now, we could only record his views as tourist.

He saw that even in war-torn Chungking the people continued to seek education. The univarsities flourished as of old. So far as the military education was concerned, this was being imparted to them in a large measure by the American and the Russian military experts. Here we might point out that Tagore did not see the work done by the American military missions, though he was doubtless aware of it. In case of the Russian military mission, he saw some of its achievements in 1925-26, but in 1916-17 such mission was non-existent, though a liaison had been already established between the revolutionaries of China and the Soviet communists.

But the greater part of assistance rendered to the Republic China by the Soviet Union took effect in 1937-39 and this fraternal alliance was not closely observed by Tagore. Nehru also saw the Soviet air expert along with the American Air Force (the A.V.G.) Commanders at work in building up the China Air Force in close co-operation with the Chinese themselves.

But it was in the sphere of the women's welfare that startling changes had been introduced in the social life of China. The women were no longer backward or indifferent to the word outside the four walls of their houses. They took interest in the politics of China, in world politics and were aware of their inalienable rights as human beings. They were co-partners with men in their common struggle, Nehru had not seen the condition of women in the previous two decades; but he had read a good deal on the

subject and knew it for certain that they did not live in a happy condition; and were subjected to a low level of life due to the man-made laws. Himself a supporter of the cause of the women he was glad about the progress which the women of China had made.

Tagore saw the worst conditions of women in China, and then in 1925-26 he saw some improvement. In the early thirties he saw the Chinese women in a still better condition, but it was after the outbreak of war with Japan that they achieved real freedom. Tagore did not see it as Nehru had done.

Cleanliness in China in 1939 was not a conspicuous feature of the civil life in towns. There was the same dirty method of marketing which is to be found in India—that is, selling of the consumers' goods in open spaces without shelter. Nehru was associated with municipal work in his own country, and his own town; and he knew what sanitary living meant. He was not at all pleased with the conditions in China.

However, though one wishes that greater progress had been made in this matter in case of China, the war exigency could be offered as one excuse, and we might not for this very reason take a harsh view of those responsible for the municipal administration of that country.

But previously when Tagore went to China, this aspect of civil life so important to the modern citizen had not been attended to by the Chinese people. They were averse to it, and the condition of sanitation in the Chinese cities was not at all desirable.

Nehru in his visits made evident progress in establishing a united front between the Chinese and the Indian people on the question of freedom of the two peoples. There was no such freedom front previously. Nehru knew that China had sympathy with India since the days of the Republic, but the Chinese had not given vent to these sentiments. When in a China Tagore witnessed the apathy of the Chinese people about the Indian problem. He tried for the same ends as Nehru, and succeeded to a very great extent—though the ultimate result (as stated above) were made evident only in 1937—39 period. Elsewhere in the Far East where Nehru went conditions in some respects were not as bright as those in China. Nehru found Indo-China to be less interested in the affairs of India than China. But was it to be wondered at ?

That country had been completely colonised by the French since a very long time and popular opinion there practically stiffled. The Indians residing in Indo-China were sympathetic to the mother country.

Militarily this land was not as well prepared as China, nor were there any American or Russian instructors here. Nehru thought, and he was right in his surmise, that Indio-China could not stand the pressure of the Japanese aggression. It would go under, just as Austria was occupied by the Nazis—even without firing a shot.

Tagore had neither time nor occassion to make such surmises, though he saw that militarily the French regimes in Indo-China had not enough guts to fight the agressor.

Municipal life in Indo-China was not different from that in China Its main cities were as much cleam, though not among the cleanest in this hemisphere. In case of earlier Tagore visits, so much progress in this matter had not been achieved. Women were not in bondage as was the case with women in some countries; but they were not as free as in China Earlier Tagore had seen them in much worse condition.

Education was not much neglected by the French authorities, but it was not up to the Chinese level. The French, it seemed, thought that the only use which the adult population could be put to was filling the post of soldiers in their colonial army. They were mistaken. The nationalism of the Indo-Chinese was soon to mobilise its forces against them.

Earlier when Tagore visited Indo-China the nationalist sentiments were not yet fully matured. It was only after the Chinese and the Indians had embarked on a programme which involved them in struggle with the foreign ruling Powers that the Indo-Chinese awoke to the need of strengthening the ramparts on the freedom front. Why should they lag behind, when all Asia was astir ?

The Indo-Chinese nationalism may yet prove an important factors in politics of the Far-East. Now the people are trying to get hold of the seaboard. The nationalists of Indo-China and other left-wing parties such as the communists and the socialists are aware of the strategic importance of their country. This is their trump card, and they would use it well. Outwardly calm Indo-China seethes with discontent and the volcano may burst any

time carrying away the Japanse pebbles and stones in its flow. But necessarily the Indo-China people want freedom, not from the Japanese alone but from all alien domination. Would the Americans enlist their support ?

While on the subject of the Indo-Chinese resistance to the Japanese aggressors, we might as well compare notes about the impressions of Tagore and Nehru in regard to the situation in Japan. Nehru did not visit this country, but he heard a good deal about it while in China. At that time militarily the Japanese were quite advanced. In 1916-17 they were not. Tagore knew their condition then, and in thirties he was able to see that country again for himself and this time pointed out that the Japanese might was stronger than ever.

However the Bengal Poet did not hear in China in 1939 what Nehru as well as other foreigners heard about Japan. Accurate estimates of the Japanses strength were known to important people in China; though of course Pear Harbour was not.

Educationally, the Japanese were not much advanced, when Nehru was in England seeking education. This was more or less same as what Tagore thought in 1916-17. By 1920 when Nehru had entered politics the number of schools and colleges was reported to have increased. Thereafter the percentage of literacy increased, though increase of intelligence was not visible and also political sanity was conspicuous by its absence.

While in China, Nehru gathered that the Japanese had made strenuous efforts to keep their educational level high, while doing everything possible to stiflle the growth of education in the occupied China, Korea and Manchuria. He also gathered that in these places the educational institutions were deliberately laid waste. Under these circumstances what was one to think about the education of the Japanese ? This action of theirs was on par with the German action—when having achieved high level of education in Europe the Germans under direction of the Nazis started burning the books written by the socialists and the communists.

Municipal life in Japan was better than anywhere else in the East, Nehru had no time to study this problem about the Japanese municipal progress while in China. He was not in the mood for that. The Japanese had made any such study impossible due to their wanton behaviour in China; which

offended all.

Earlier, however, when engaged in Congress ministry work Nehru did point out that Indian municipalities could learn from foreign municipalities including those of Japan, Germany, Austria, America, England, Russia and several other countries.

Similarly about women's affairs. In some respects the Japanese women were advanced like those of Western countries, and he wanted the Indian women to learn from them what they could and what was really worth learning. But mostly the Japanese women of the labouring classes were treated as serfs. and had no rights. This appalling fact was confirmed to him, when Nehru was in China.

India's front with Japan. Nehru did nor object to it provided the Japanese had a front with China also; and gave up their imperialist ambitions. Earlier it was possible to persuade Japan to have such a front, and be drawn into the family of the nations of the world. But since Japan was outlawed in 1931, Nehru like most sensible men never gave the matter a second thought. When in China this particular problem did not interest him at all.

Dealing with Tagore's views on these subjects one could only say that he adhered to his previous opinion of high education level of the Japanese but in 1939 like Nehru he pointed out that education did not mean destruction of the cultural centres in other places by the Japanese. He thought that the Japanese never really cared for education as it was understood in the civilised world.

The Japanese municipal life was observed by Tagore in 1916-17. It was not better than the European countries but improving. In 1925 greater improvement was recorded. He wanted Indians to benefit from the experiences of the Japanese municipal administrators. Later on this aspect of the Japanese life ceased to interest him just as he was unable to lavish praise on the progress achieved by the Japanese in various other walks of life.

Women's affairs fall in the same category. Tagore's own experiences did not prevent him from agreeing with Nehru, when the latter said that the Japanese women labourers were not at all well off, and were in many respects little better than the Indaian labouring women.

Politically Siam never inspired either Tagore or Nehru to

make any bold prophecies about its future role in the Far East, just as they had made in case of China and Indo-China. They thought it to be a very beautiful country with fine elephants, pagodas, temples and picturesque scenery, which delighted them. But they also saw that it was priest-ridden. That its rulers were weaklings and constantly sought foreign aid instead of trying to stand on their own legs. Little Siam, they thought, was out to get trouble and it got that.

But perhaps, conditions in 1916-17 were less revolting. Certainly that is true. Tagore was then silent about the political aspects of the life in Siam, though he had his own misgivings. Ten years later, Siam was deep in the bondage of foreign Powers, hand by 1937, the Japanese had come on the scene, and made their position secure in that place.

Education in Siam was on increased level since 1930, but not as much as in Japan or other progressive countries of the world. Here too the main opposition came from the priestly vested interests and the clique of the militarist-fascist type who wanted to give the Thais military education only.

However, since the Japanese infiltration there, the clock was put back, so that when Nehru visited Thailand, the process of making the Thais as intellectually down grade as the Koreans had already set in. Educational institutions were closed down, and instead turned into centres for imparting instruction in military goose-step. The monasteries either served the purpose of propagating the Japanese ideas or were made into veritable military fortresses, just as the Spaniards belongrng to Franco faction did in Spain. The cup of the humiliation of the Thais was full. Nehru saw all this with his own eyes. Tagore was spared this horrid sight, though he saw Siam in the stage of illiteracy earlier. However then it was not a planned move to keep the country in a state of illiteracy. Priesthood was strong, but the only powerful group. Liberals and democrats were trying to make themselves heard. Progress was possible. It came, but was later cut short before completion. The anger which Tagore felt was equal to that felt by Nehru.

But they were helpless to stop this downward movement. The only group over which they had any influence was that of the Indian settlers in Thailand. To this group they sent numerous messages asking them to throw their lot with the democratic

elements in Thailand. This they did. They tried to prevent the rot from setting in. But they found that the Quislings had bargained with the Japanese and had decided to put the clock back in Thailand as in Indo-China.

This group of Indians is today not much heard of in Thailand or Indo-China; but it would raise its head again, once the Japanese forces are withdrawn, and the strength of Shogun military-fascist clique is crushed. Then this clique would not be able to raise its head again and the democratic Indians following Nehru's lead (which is in this matter same as what Tagore would have done) would set the wheel in motion in the two countries (as they would elsewhere) and will see to it that in a short space of time the conditions there return to normal and people become democratic, educated and strong enough to defend themselves and play their role in the new League of Nations.

Municipal life in Thailand was negligible. It has few big cities most of which have good municipalities functioning, but in this matter too large measure of progress must await the end of the Japanese rule. Neither Nehru nor Tagore found anything special to report about these municipalities.

The condition of women was not satisfactory in Thailand. Like most backward countries in the East traffic in women was not uncommon feature of life here. This was what Tagore and Nehru observed. Moreover, their education was neglected, and in the matter of marriage they were the slaves of men. Progress in this matter would be slow in future, for with the Japanese infiltration a further deterioration has occurred in the condition of the women. When they return to their island homes, but without any plundered wealth, it would be time to carry on this work of women's welfare.

Next doors to Thailand are Malaya and Burma. Nehru visited these countries first in 1937, and then in 1939. Tagore had visited them on all these occasions he went to China and Japan or America *via* the Far East. What did they see in these areas ? They saw that both these countries in the early years of this century as well as in the thirties were ill-prepared in the matter of the defence of the country. Militarily they were back numbers having no modern army, air force or navy. Politically, it was found that the Japanese agents had made deep inroads in the politics of the country, and created a situation favourable to

themselves; and one which could provide them cover to effect the ultimate conquest of the country. The priestly nobles played prominent part and established the reactionary regime. Education in Malaya was non-existent during Tagore's early sojourn in the Far East, though conditions in Burma in this respect weie slightly better.

As time passed, matters began to improve. In Burma the progress was achieved at a quicker pace mainly through the initiative of the enlightened Burmess politicians, and in part due to the efforts of the Chinese and the Indian settlers. In Malaya, in such cities as Kuala, Lumper, Penang and Singapore, education had begun to spread, though greater part of the population was still illiterate.

The Indian settlers here were less enlightened, though there was a sprinkling of class-conscious workers and nationalist-minded middle class. Women's rights were not infrequently trampled upon, and their condition in Malaya was much worse than in Siam. In Burma the condition of women was not such as to win approved of Nehru or Tagore. The Buddhist *junkers* held them in bondage and would not give them the rights to which they were entitled. Municipal life had also not made much strides in either country, though in such cities of Burma as Rangoon, Mandalay, Prome, etc., the condition was somewhat better, and there were greater prospects. This applies to the bigger cities of Malaya also.

However, Burma had one acute problem which did not exist in case of Indo-China and Siam and which kept Tagore and Nehru pretty busy whenever they went to Burma. This was the problem of the Indo-Burmese and Sino-Burmese relations.

It pained Tagore and Nehru to learn that tempers rose to high sometimes on either side that it led to outbreak of riots and bloodshed involving huge loss of life on either side. The two men did everything possible to end this unnatural state of affairs between two sister countries, which once formed part of the same land—India. Nehru in the course of his visits to Burma analysed the root cause of the differences between the two countries to be economic. He thought Burma needed industrial planning to make use of its untapped resources. He was aware of the fact that in certain cases Indians had made a lot of money in Burma, but he was for socialisation of the Burmese industry which would necessarily entail huge sacrifices on the part of the Indian community.

However, the war resulted in heavy damage to the property of the Indians as well as the Burmese, and the chances of the dispossessed Indians in Burma recovering their assets are just nil, unless of course the British take the unusually bold step of making the Japanese pay in kind and in human labour (to be used for constructional purposes). Then, perhaps, the Indians might succeed in redeeming their lost property. But in that case Nehru's eminently sensible advice should be kept in view. This would smooth out the differences between the Burmese and the Indians. Tagore's view about the strife in Burma was based on this theory—that the Burmese had forgotten that culturally they had greater unity with India. He thought Buddhism to be an Indian cultural reaction against the cult of the Siva, the Hindu god. This did not mean that he was very much enamoured of Buddhism; only he thought that the cultural unity between the Burmese and the Indians did exist in the past. Further the Indian settlers in Burma were loyal to their mother country, but not disloyal to Burma. He wondered why it was not possible to discard the old culture which was extremely unsuitable for the modern needs and substitute for it the new and the more vigorous culture—the democratic ideas and scientific socialism.

He wanted the Burmese people to pay more attention to this matter. Needless to say that the Burmese leaders, pious, monastery-educated folk as they are, thought Tagore and Nehru to be heretics—following the doctrinese which a fantastic U.S.A. woman Congress representative has described as "immoral". How could they follow immoral doctrines such as of communism, socialism, internationalism, and ideals of unity based on ultimate *Anschluss* of Burma and India ?

So they ignored these doctrines and rattled on with their work of quietly handling over their country to the Buddhist brother Japanese.

About the Sino-Burmese problem, they offered similar advice, though of course they did not suggest that the Burmese should allow unrestricted immigration in case of the Indians or the Chinese. But as in the case of India so in that of China, this advice was unceremoniously brushed aside.

In Malaya no such problems existed. The relations of the Indians and the Chinese with local population were cordial.

Now we turn to the East Indies. Considering the problems which engaged the attention of Nehru and Tagore in China, Indo-China, Thailand, Malaya and Burma, one is inclined to laugh at the suggestion that such a geographically remote and politically obseure region as the East Indies could ever awaken the interest of Rabindranath Tagore. And yet East Indies was as much a problem for these two men as Indio-China, Thailand and Malaya if not equal in magnitude to the problem of Burma and China.

What was the main problem of East Indies? It was the Dutch misrule. The Dutch, one of the first to turn the government of their country into a workable democratic state, forgot like several others to apply the lesson of democracy to those areas which had come under their rule, because they, once a nation of roving nomads, cast their anchor on these lands and having driven the local population into the jungles or finished them off decided that these areas should be given the name of the Dutch Empire. Thereafter as the space of Netherlands contracted in Europe, the Empire the Dutch grew in inverse ratio to the homeland of theirs. This Empire of theirs was visited by Tagore in 1916-17 but not by Nehru. Tagore repeated his visits later on, but Nehru never set foot on its soil, though he heard a good deal about it, while he was in the Far East. What he heard was what Tagore had seen.

The sum total of their experiences was that the economic condition in the Indies was very bad, the Japanese had the monopoly of the trade, while other Powers, including the Dutch themselves, were treating the Indies as a colonial market which could be dumped with goods as often as they wished, while the inhabitants were never told to learn to manufacture the articles for their everyday use, which alone could have made the islands sufficient in the consumers' goods and enabled the inhabitants to have a greater purchasing power. They could then have a higher standard of living. Educationally these areas were most retrograde. The Dutch had not encouraged the idea of the education of the vast number of the populace. Not to talk of education, they had not even encouraged the habit of wearing a good dress, so that, to the great scandal of the rest of the world, men and women in Bali went about with little or no dress at all.

Orthodoxy was rampant, and the cult of the temples and pagodas flourished with all the attendant prosperity of the priestly

class. Indeed the orthodoxy had got so much hold of the population that most old rituals, which seem barbaric to the modern man, were practised by the inhabitants of the Indies. For instance, tribal dance of the Maori type in Africa was not an unusual feauture of life. Further in many places the people had no profession at all except that of petty shopkeepers or coolies; and on this they had to subsist.

Women were held in the same condition as in Thailand and even worse. Altogether it was not an inspiring sight for the politician to see.

The Chinese and the Indian nationals were well organised, and were in most cases of progressive views, and there were some organisations of the population too, formed with the object of obtaining political and economic power, but these were few in numbers then, although with the passage of time they have grown in numbers as in strength.

These nationalists of the East Indies have a progressive and anti-fascist programme. They want to have the rule of their country in their own hands. They have sympathy with the freedom programme of the Indians and the Indians reciprocate their sentiments.

Both Nehru and Tagore tried to enlist the backing of the Congress for their cause and succeeded. In the resolutions of the Indian National Congress were also incorporated the demands of the inhabitants of the Dutch Indies. With the British and the French imperialisms, and the German and the Japanse fascisms, the imperialism of the Dutch came in also for rough criticism.

The bases of fraternal unity between the two peoples were laid by the two leaders. It is now for these two peoples to show that they can continue the programme of unity. Their leaders should take the initiative to strengthen this bond by the exchange of missions, etc. In this connection, we should remember that Tagore long ago pointed out that there was cultural unity between India and the East Indies, just as there was with Thailand, Indo-China, Burma and China, Relics of old Indian cultural in the Indies proved that the two peoples had a common culture in the past.

This could no doubt prove of immense value in building up the future ties with these people. The Indian associations in the East Indies, which are for the most part Congressite, could play

their part in cementing the relations between the two peoples.

This cultural unity, coupled with an identity of interests in political and economic matters, would be a sure basis for the peace in this hemisphere. It should be extended to cover all the peoples of the East.

On the southern tip of India lies the Island of Ceylon, which was also visited several times by the two leaders. Its people have great cultural and political bonds with India; but like the Burmese, they too have been prone to forget the debt that they owe to the mother country. As a result of which people not at all friendly disposed towards India have played upon their separatist tendencies and sought to keep the two countries apart from each other.

The bulk of the Ceylonese, however, remained indifferent towards such fantastic schemes. If Sicily could shake off the Italian influence, Corsica that of the French or the channel islands that of the British; then perhaps Ceylon might separate from India. But even in that case, be it noted that India and Ceylon have been united with each other since a very long time, while the link between the Italians and the Sicilians, the French and the Corsicans, the British and the inhabitants of the channel islands has been of recent origin.

The two leaders have not found it difficult to persuade the people of Ceylon that unity was in their best interests and also it was the best thing for India.

The Indian National Congress (Ceylon) which is representative of the majority of the political minded Ceylonese gave them on all occasions a hearty reception.

What about the other features of life in Ceylon ? Did it satisfy Nehru and Tagore ?

Educationally Ceylon was not retrograde, though of course not much progress was achieved in this direction--this being due to the fact that power was transferred to the people late. But neither Tagore nor Nehru looked at the problems of Ceylon from the view-point of a friendly neighbour visiting the country next doors—that was at least their attitude in regard to China, Manchuria, Indo-China, Thailand, Malaya and the Dutch Indies. Ceylon was India just as Burma was India. They asked themselves —were there not certain areas in India which were educationally retrograde ? They were being looked after by the Congressmen.

Similarly there was need for the Congressmen to take interest in the affairs of Ceylon. This done, the progress achieved was amazing. In a short time Ceylon rivalled other educationally advanced areas of India. And the progress continued to be achieved in this direction.

Muncipal life in Ceylon is similarly improving since Tagore and Nehru's visit, though leaving aside Colombo, other cities of Ceylon have yet to learn the elementary lessons of hygienic living. Women's condition is better. The All India Women's Conference takes interest in the affairs of the Ceylonese women; and does everything possible to improve their lot. All this is a foreruner of that greater unity, the achievement of which has become a duty with the Indians and the Ceylonese. A united front of the two peoples based on the ideals of common nationhood would last even after the achievement of freedom; for which they together strive.

Other notable countries visited by these people were Iran, Spain, Germany, England, Italy, France and Russia. We have described Tagore's experiences in France, Germany, England and Italy. That was of course how a poet reacted to such travels. We have now to deal with the Politician Nehru's reactions in so far as his experiences and that of Tagore coincided. In this connection too we should keep in view the previous method which we have employed in describing their joint experiences in the Far-East, Ceylon and the Indies. That simplifies the task of recording a tourists's impressions of comparing the impressions of two tourists.

Iran was visited by Tagore in 1936, but not by Nehru. The former went there on an invitation from the Persian King Raza Shah. It was mainly a literary function, but the Bengal Poet had the time to see political changes in that country also. He saw a semi-industrialised and mainly feudal and tribal country being fast modernised by a group of energetic nationalists. They had increased the percentage of literacy by copying from the states of the Levant the methods of education. In the Levant, French was the official language and education imparted on French methods. The German and the Italian languages as well as the methods of education in vogue in Germany and Italy (not of course the Nazi education) were also becoming popular in the Levant. The nationalists and the progressive people of Iran also

followed these very methods. The trouble with some of the Iranaian nationalists was, however, this that they were too much enamoured of the French, the Italian and the German institutions and too little of their next-door neighbour—the Russians, who were carrying on a huge experiment in the social history of man.

Tagore had no time to point it out to them. If Nehru had gone there he would have certainly asked the people of Iran to turn their attention of this much-needed problem. However, apart from these mistakes of the people. there were other redeeming features in their life which Tagore noticed and appreciated.

He was not a scholar of Persion and he could not describe the linguistic changes in Iran, which were the result of the impact of French on the Persian language; but this much he could say that the old methods of Persian poets were falling in disrepute, and also the prose-writers were giving up the fantastic old methods of writing prose. They had attuned their style in keeping with the needs of the times. Nationalism, liberalism and socialism were the driving forces for these *literati*.

Municipal life was being remodelled and the country was divided into numerous districts, each with its own perfect responsible for the municipal administration in these areas.

Women's condition was better than in the neighbouring countries of Iraq and Afghanistan. New plans were afoot to change their position, educationally, legally, socially, etc., to their advantage. These changes were not sponsored by men alone, but by women leaders of the Iranian suffragette movement, so that women were to get freedom planned by their own leaders.

Industrialisation was afoot. New factories were set up. Roads built. Agriculture modernised. Vehicular traffic took the place of the ancient system of communications. When Nehru went to Russia, he also heard about the industrial changes in Iran. These were aided in fraternal spirit by the Soviet Union which had given similar facilities to other countries of the Far-East. Similarly, bilateral trade agreements had been signed between Iran and Russia to make Iran self-sufficient in every conceivable way and to increase the purchasing power of the Iranian citizen. Russian experts worked in the factories of Iran.

However, when Tagore went to Iran, it was different. The Nazi economic and trade *Drang Nach Osten* had extended to Iran, and German experts were sent to this country at the orders of

Herr Funk. The Russians gradually withdrew.

Militarily, at the time of Nehru's visit to Russia, the Iranians were progressing aided by the Soviet military experts. Of course, Raza Shah's genius as a military man was an important factor in the life of the people of Iran. But Russian aid was forthcoming in men (military experts), munitions, and the choicest books of Russia's choicest military academies.

At the time Tagore visited Iran, the tempo of Soviet military aid had become considerably lesss and comparatively the aid from the Third Reich was speeded up. All this has been aptly described by the Middle East correspondents of the Russian, British and American papers, as also of such French papers as *Echo de Paris Populair L'ouvre* and *Ecrope Nouvelle.*

Neither the women's affairs nor municipal life had changed much in Iran in Nehru's days (Russian visit). In educational matters, progress was being made. Nehru came to know that the Russian aid in this matter too was forthcoming and had resulted in a steady change in Iranian life in the sphere of education.

Later Tagore saw German educational experts taking over the educational institutions of Iran, and transforming some of them at least into the bastions (since then fallen) of the Third Reich.

So far as language is concerned, what Nehru heard in this matter tended to show that the Russian impact on the Persian language tended to modernise it. The Persians had contact with a people who were free and treated them on equal footing. But it was too early to say what would be the changed shape of the Persian language. But the need of change was felt in 1927, and Nehru could see it as any one else. Later other influences dominated the Persian life.

But that phase is now ended. Of course the Persian people can benefit from their impact with the Germans and the Italians, and when these countries can send their democractic experts (educational, military, economic and technical), the benefit to the Persians would be still greater. But for the present the Persian band wagon is hitched to the star of the Powers composing the United Nations.

No doubt this latter course has the approval of Nehru, and Tagore would prefer it to any other drift in Persian life. But it is not a question of the loyalty of the people of Iran with this country or that. The Iranian people, according to the Nehru and Tagore theory of world relationship, should avoid militaristic and

fascist tendencies. Whether in future they want to be guided by the Germans, the Italians, the British, the Russians, or any other people is of course for them to decide. India wants a strong, well-educated and progressive Iran as its neighbour. Beyond that neither Tagore nor Nehru or any other leader could ask anything.

This brings us to the all-important question of Indian and world united front with the people of Iran. With a freedom-loving Iran, a freedom-loving India, headed by such men as Nehru, could have firm relationship. The two countries have sympathy with the ideals of freedom of each other, and this fact was confirmed by Nehru in Russia (whither Iranian democrats went) and by Tagore in Iran in 1936.

These were then the outstanding problems of Iran, which interested Tagore and Nehru. They had not much time to study any other matter. But the beauty of the Iranian country-side did not require a Persian poet to admire it. Nehru would have liked to go there for this reason, as for other political or educational reasons. But he had no time then for that. Now he might do so, if he can get time for it. He would no doubt like to visit other beautiful places too. The same applies to Tagore. He was more fortunate in get a ting glimpse of Iranian beautiful sights but he could not stay there for long.

Adjoining to Iran are the countries of the Turkoman Republics and Afghanistan. Neither Tagore nor Nehru went there. But no doubt having gone very near to these areas, they heard a lot about these two countries. The Turkoman Republics were very much advanced in all respects in 1936. The country of Afghaniftan was not so well advanced. In 1927, when Nehru was in Russia, sparks of internal strife were ignited in Afghanistan by a section of hothead reactionaries, but though Aman Ullah was on the right path, the Russians could nor intervene on either side. They sympathised with the progressive of that country. They wanted them to be free and to settle down to the task of the internal reconstuction of the country.

The conditions in the Turkoman and Tajik Republics were improving at the time of Nehru's visit to U.S.S.R. But obviously progress well as Tagore's political views about this country have been described in the chapter dealing with China. However, that does not mean that their views have been fully stated—concerning *all subjects*. So there is need to discuss their views on other aspects

of Spain. Naturally we will deal with Nehru's views first, since he visited Spain while Tagore went to France and Italy and there learned all about Spain.

Nehru found that economically Spain was as backward as the worst and the famine-ravaged areas of India. Illiteracy was not an uncommon feature of life there, indeed it was strongly prevalent in Andalusia, parts of old Castile, Navarra, and Catalonia. But there were redeeming features in the land where hunger was rampant and illiteracy stalked—the Spanish trade unions were carrying on a campaign for the liquidation of illiteracy and mass hunger. The C.G.T., the anarchist unions and the communist-influenced unions carried on a campaign based on the idea of co-operative village societies and village communes. Libraries which moved about from one place to another were organised. Food stocks were collected to serve the needs of all. The organisation of the Spaniards won the admiration of Nehru. He wished some such system could be introduced in India. So far it has not been. Now obviously there is time to introduce it, when the Indian peasants have large stocks of food. If they throw it away and hunger stalks the land, one should not only blame the administration, but also the political parties of that area including the socialists and the communists.

The Indian political parties should also remember that Nehru went to Spain at a time when the Republic had been only recently constituted (the Spanish Republican administration continued in office till 1939 and these years which were spent not in maintaining internal order, but in quelling disorder). It was in this space of six years that the defects of the rule of Spanish monarchy were sought to be ended. It was in this period that illiteracy was ended in parts of Spain (formerly it was much more wide-spread). Hunger was also sought to be ended in this short period of six years. If the results are judged on this basis, they seem to be all the more remarkable. Few governments functioning, as the Spanish administration did, could do in such a brief period of six years what was done by that regime.

Looking at the affairs of women, one finds that similar progress had been achieved. The hold of the church had made the women of Spain some of the most backward in Europe, parts of the Czarist Russia excepted. But the Republican constitution recognised their equality, and what is more the Republicans made

this equality a practical scheme —the trade unions and the political parties taking the lead in this matter. One of the leading exponents of the women's movement was Doloris Iburreri or Passionaria, as she was popularly and affectionately called by her people.

Municipal life in such cities as Barcelona (the only important city visited by the Indian leader) was found by Nehru to be quite up to the level of the most modernised of the European countries.

Other cities not visited by Nehru such as Madrid and Valencia carried on (even in wartime) a high level of municipal administration. Those like Cadiz and Malaga which had fallen in the rebel hands earlier, also, while under the Rebublicans, had a high standard of municipal administration. Of course now the clock has been put back by Franco, Suner and others, and lights have gone out all over Spain. Food situation, education, women's affairs, economic affairs, municipal life—in short all that goes by the name of modern civilisation—ushered in by the republican regime—has gone down crashing since the days of the rebel regime. If Nehru were to visit Spain today, of course he would not find a vestige of that bright life, which so much attracted him in the years of the civil war.

And yet if he had gone a little earlier, he might have seen much more in Spain than what he saw. A good deal of demolition of civilisation had already been carried out by the vandals of General Franco. What the block-busters of Franco could not destroy, and indeed would never be able to destroy was the indomitable spirit of freedom in Spain. The Spaniard loves freedom with the same love which inspired the ancient Greeks and the Romans, and their descendants, the last century Greeks who fought against the barbarous Turks, and the present-day Greeks of the Eam and the Elas who have defined the German hordes and are now struggling to maintain their freedom—and the Italians of Garibaldi and the present-day Italians who have rid their country of the fascist scourage. Such was the Spanish love for freedom, and such it remains today, though necessarily suppressed due to the gangster methods of Franco gang. This brings us to the crucial question—how far Nehru succeded in establishing a united front with the Spanish people ? Indeed how far ? The united front (sponsored by Nehru) was as complete in case of Spain as one might wish it

to be. He was as much successful here as in such countries like China, Czechoslovakia, Russia, etc. He met all the important people in Spain—Negrin and Cabellero, companies and the commanders of the international brigade. He rubbed shoulders with the Spanish Republican soldiers, the militia men and the trade unionists. They all equired from him about India, just as he enquired from them about Spain. In this way greetings were exchanged, and feelings of warm affection between the two peoples established.

When the Republican flag once again flies proudly over Barcelona, Madrid and the other cities, these greetings of the two peoples could be renewed and then it would be possible to establish friendship between them on a better footing and this friendship would be continued to the advantage of other freedom loving nations of the world.

So much about Nehru's activities in establishing friendship between the Indian and the Spanish people. What about Tagore ? Of course, he went only to France, and there heard about the progress of the Spanish Republic. He sympathised with it. He appreciated what it had done to raise the standard of living of the people, and he was especially pleased about its cultural progress. A good socialist and a democrat, he wished Spain well in its gallent struggle. He wanted the Indians to emulate the example of the Republican Spaniards in all respects. However, since that Spanish regime has ceased to exist, it is useless to speculate on what it would have done to cement relations with India, and at the same time please Tagore.

However, when the new Republican regime is formed in Spain, then it would be for that regime to take up the thread where the previous Republican administration left it, and to have still greater friendship with India.

Among the matters which would require its immediate attention, and which Tagore would like it to do foremost, is the establishment of cultural relationship with India, with exchange of cultural missions in the manner suggested in previous chapter. Spanish writers have become anti-fascists in a struggle which lasted for more or less eight years. They could be of great use in the cultural revival in India. The experience of the Indian writers in the struggle for freedom would be similarly of use to the Spaniards in their struggle at home for freedom, peace and security

of work.

This brings us to the question of political and economic relations between Spain and India. Tagore favoured it then, and he would have favoured it now too. There could not be any two opinions between him and Nehru in this matter. The two had identical views on Spain, they wanted cordial and friendly relations with it.

So far as those subjects were concerned about which they felt strongly—they could express themselves in like ways. Even in economic and political matters, they could speak in the same strain apart from the fact that Nehru, the Marxist, employed sometimes Marxist terminology in his such talks, while Tagore took the standpoint of humanitarian ideals.

Sometimes in cultural matters too, they could speak with equal experience about the subject. Spain was such a subject. They were both interested in its culture.

About Germany their views have been mentioned previously. The need not be dilated upon. The German nation had taken so many giddy right about turns in the past twenty years that one does not know whether any expression of praise now for some of its achievements would not spoil it and encourage it to indulge in similar political acrobatics again. If Nehru and Tagore considered its cultural and scientific virtues to be remarkable, then surely it is high time that the Germans lived up to that ideal.

Then there would be much in Germany to interest at least one of the two leaders—Nehru. He can go and see the places, which Tagore would have loved to see —the Westphalian countryside, Dortmund Ems Canal, Kiel Harbour, Krupp Works (building arms for international forces under international control) Leuna Chemical Works, Mannheim, Leipzig, Dresden, Frankfort-on-the-Order, Essen, and that pride of the Central European municipal administration—Hamburg.

Nehru's visit to England was a whirlwind political tour, in which political and economic programme dominated. Tagore's visit was not as much political as Nehru's, but patriot as he was, could he help advising England in matters of the British policy towards India ? Of course not. The British needed this advice, and he gave it to them. Their rule in India was such as to require frank criticism on the part of Tagore. In literary matters, their programme differed. Tagore saw mostly literary personalities and

Nehrue those publishers and writers who were interested in political matters.

Itlay was another country which one of them, Nehru, would like to visit, now that 11 Duce has been dealt with and the menace of fascism ended in that country. He could see many places of beauty there—those of which have not been damaged in the war. Tagore loved these sights in Rome, Venice, Florence and Turin, though he had not much time to see these places.

France pleased Nehru for its tidy municipalities, the smooth working of the *front-populair* in the early days and for its historical places like the famous prison of the last of the Bourbons, the Arch of Triumph, the place of the revolution', etc. He also saw these historical places which are the relics of the church.

He did not see all of the country, but perhaps he would like to repeat his visit, and this time see all that there is worth seeing in that country.

About their Russian visits, we don't see much difference in outlook'. They agreed about Russia's role in the modern world. They saw its industrialisation plans and industrial plants. They met scientist, *literati*, jurists, lawyers, authors and playwrights, novelists and poets. But they did not see the places which the 'Intourist' Moscow takes so great pain to advertise, such as Sebastopol, Yalta, Odessa, Rostav-on-Don, the giant electrical plants of Russia, and its power stations, the copper works at Irkutsk, the Lena and Yenesei gold-fields, the fine harbours of Kronstant, Vladivo-stok and Novo Rossiysk, the Leningrad-Archangel Canal, Leningrad, etc.

They saw the Red Square, Kremlin, Lenin's Mausoleum and all places of note in Moscow.

When there is time and occasion for it Nehru would no doubt visit Russia again.

In all these countries, England, France, Russia, Germany and Italy (in the latter two countries before the fascist rule), these two men laid the foundations of lasting friendship with India. Now the superstructure could be raised and friendship could be increased. These were then their travels and such were the results of these travels.

VII

FAME IN OTHER COUNTRIES

The fame of Tagore and Nehru spread as a result of their travels, the internationalist touch which characterised their speeches, and several other factors. It was remarkable, considering the fact that their country was yet engrossed in deep problems which needed time for solution.

But their fame spread in foreign countries even earlier than in India. It might be suggested that since this spread of frame followed so close on their visit abroad, it might have been deliberately sought by them, and their (then) small group of friends engineered the plan to spread their fame and actually bolstered up their name through some papers, etc.

Facts belie this assumption. It is not possible—this plan. How many people achieve fame abroad, simply because of such deliberate plans ? If that were true, then men like Feroze Khan Noon would be quite popular in foreign countries. As a matter of fact this man stayed abroad (intermittently) for over nine years. But he has not achieved any fame; try as he might, the press world shuns him unless of course it is a very formal talk which needs to be recorded. Similarly, the fame which Nehru and Tagore achieved was not according to premediated plan. It just came to them. It was years later that Tagore societies were formed in England, France, America and other countries. Even then the object was not to bolster up the name of Rabindranath Tagore, but to record an appreciation of his works and encourage the study of Tagore on the right lines.

Similarly, years later (though they knew him earlier) such men as Krishna Menon, Edward Thompson and A.J. Cummings (in Britain), Romain Rolland and Pertinax (in France) and Anup Singh and Pearl Buck (in America) made an organised effort to encourage a spirit of greater understanding of Nehru.

What the reader would say about the Congress committees in foreign countries. Did they too avoid from the very beginning any debunking of Nehru and Tagore ? In some cases, the Congress committees were formed after Nehru and Tagore became famous. In others they already existed. They might have employed the names of Nehru and Tagore fraquently. But obviously they could

do that only in audiences where these names were understood.

But the same reader would say that in a democratic country it is not necessary for the audience to understand the personality of a man before they come to attend a meeting, where that personality is to be praised. Some people could be, in that way, made admirers of that personality. Of course that is possible. But surely then that personality must do something to deserve such popularity —something which the average man understands—for instance, he wants an appreciation of his struggle for living and he expects his sympathisers and high personalities to find out a way which could end his bread problem. In this way the loyalty between him and the high personage is fostered. Also as the time passes the spirit of curiosity would force such people to read and understand the men they admire. Thus, *ipso facto*, the admiration in which that personality is held is not the result of debunking propaganda. It is to a large measure due to the spirit of learning which animates most of us and which is indeed the basis of all scientific knowledge. It is, therefore, safe to assume that Nehru and Tagore's greatness was not bolstered up among the foreigners by the Congress committees. It was as much due to their efforts as to those of others (the general population of other countries) that their fame began to spread. Also we cannot assume that all men in foreign countries, who are interested in Tagore and Nehru and respect them as great men, do so out of altogether disinterested motives. Take the case of a publisher who, finding Nehru a man of world fame, publishes some book dealing with his life. He makes money out of it, just as he does out of his other publications, and he helps in spreading the fame of Nehru in the right perspective. Like those who consider Nehru a great man, he tries to create similar impression among the reading public. At heart he may or may not be a great admirer of the Indian Leader (this applies to Tagore too) but he is instrumental in spreading his fame.

Similar is the case of the newspaper or magazine editor who wants a name to blazon the headlines and sell the papers. Sometimes this gentleman is without much creative ability. Astute compiler that he is, he would publish a photograph of Nehru, some recent news about him, and a biographical sketch of his by some writer or other. He has coveted the space, turned out the paper, made money, enjoyed editing the sketch, spread fame

of Nehru and helped others to understand him.

He is the second type of those persons who make the Indian leader popular, an d his motives are not altogether disinterested.

Then there is the party campaigner (usually belonging to labour parties) who often in heat of campaign extols Indian leaders to the skies to show his friendship with India and to get into the Parliament. He is not altogether a disinterested friend of Nehru. If his party or he himself continue to support Indian cause, then the use of Nehru's name by him is par-donable. He had his own ends to serve, but good ends. As for what he said in the heat of campaign, such things may help or hinder him, but among the audience the impression of greatness of Nehru grows, so that sometimes the publisher praises Nehru, ignoring to some extent his own interests.

However, leaving aside the party politics and the vagaries of men under its influence, such men of this third type are often, when even not on party platform among the most frank admirers of Nehru.

There is another type of person who by his foolhardy opposition to the Indian leaders (Tagore and Nehru) tried to remove the good impression they made on public abroad. He did not want them to become popular, and yet he often found that his talkes against them hit him back like a boomerang, and had just the opposite effect to what is desired by him. He is the Tory Party man or the India Office official who in season and out indulged in a vociferous campaign against them.

However, though Nehru and Tagore's fame rests secure and has been built on firm foundations, it is as well to point out that these days other men, besides the members of the Tory Party and the India Office officials, could make an effort to malign the name of Nehru and Tagore. In fact, whenever some people, partly due to their ideal and partly due to profit motive, try to boost the name of some great men then other people out of similar motives try to minimise their popularity or even altogether end it.

This has happened in case of Stalin and Lenin; though so far as the latter leader is concerned, not much is heard about his opponents these days.

But it is unlikely to happen in case of Tagore or Nehru. They are not members of the communist party to arouse the ire of those who have been not at all pleased with Stalin (for reasons best

known to them only). There might be some flutter in Tory dovecots, as there has been in the past. Out of spite Tories might speak against or criticise the political writings of Tagore. But shrewd financiers as they are, they would not try their hand to make money out of this deal. This is not to say their campaign is right in one case while it is not so in the other. It is wrong in both cases. It does not foster united front between the two peoples on the issue of anti-fascism and peace of Europe. In case of India, it does not foster a feeling of friendship between India and Britain.

Even this factor though it might prove deterrent in case o■ Russo-British relations would not deter the Tory wire-pullers, whether at party headquarters, or on newspaper staffs, or in publishing firms, from having a go at Nehru or attempting a posthumous criticism of Tagore, were such a scheme economically feasible.

But it is not, And so the fame of two leaders rests secure in the outside world.

11

TAGORE AND BHARATI

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

Rabindranath Tagore's personality was a fusion of power and purity, of sweetness and light. There was a richness about everything he did—whether it was inditing poetry, writing prose, creating music, or rearing up an institution. This is not to be confused with cheap lavishness or mere versatility. It was rather an inner divine being, radiating its rainbow colours of grace on everything Rabindranath was associated with. Here was an *annadamaya purusha*, a Realised Sage and the Complete Man. He has influenced many millions and has also been the catalytic agent that has released the creative energy in some, the flame of patriotism in some others, the ideal of moral life in some others, still, and the motivation for good works in not a few. He has, in short, re-created for the modern Indian the full potentialities of the three yogas detailed by Krishna in the *Gita*—Jnana, Karma and Bhakti.

Yet, it all seems a strange and fascinating story, for Rabindranath Tagore belonged to Bengal primarily. He chose to write mainly in Bengali. Except for that short dramatic poem *The Child* that fuses reality and symbolism into one phosphorescent whole, all his poetry was written in Bengali. So were his dramas, and his famous novels, *Yogayog Chokher Bali*, *Char Adhyay*, *Malancha*, *Sesher Kabita* : all, all were written in Bengali. It was only after 1913 that his works began to be translated into English, thus reaching a steadily widening audience. As soon as

authentic translations of his works came to appear, all Indian homes welcomed him with open hands. The reason for his sudden popularity and continuing significance for all Indians lies, however, in the simple fact of his universality. Even his Visva-Bharati was conceived, not as a symbol of the Bengali renaissance, but as a universal meeting place of ideas and ideals an international centre of education and culture.

It is because he stood for external values, as early as at least the second decade of this century, Tamil Nad woke up to him and hailed him as a Mahakavi and a modern Rishi. He must have made this tremendous impression on other language groups too. Speaking of Tamil Nad only, I can say that of all the modern poets of India at the beginning of this century, only Tagore was hailed by Subhramanya Bharati as a Kavindra. And Bharati too was a sovereign patriot in his own right, and the supreme poet of Tamil Nad. Bharati not merely praised Rabindranath, but he also translated some of his prose and poetry into Tamil, and thus, introduced him to millions in Tamil Nad who knew neither Bengali nor English.

Twenty years younger than Rabindranath Tagore, Subhramanya Bharati was already a well-known patriot-poet of Tamil Nad, at the time of the Nobel award to the Bengali poet in 1913. Bharati was then a political exile in French Pondicherry, and perhaps his admiration for Tagore had blossomed even earlier. As a sub-editor of a leading Tamil newspaper *Swadesa Mitran*, Bharati had been in charge of translating into Tamil and publishing in *Mitran*, articles in English that were of public interest. It was thus that Bharati translated quite a few speeches of Swami Vivekananda. His next favourite was certainly Rabindranath Tagore. In his aims and ideals, apart from his love of poetry, Bharati found a kindred spirit in Rabindranath Tagore. The half-humorous, half-serious style of Tagore was also imitated effectively by Bharati in Tamil. One of the long articles of Tagore translated into Tamil by Bharati was on 'Discipline'. Tagore's article has appeared in *The Modern Review*. Here Tagore compared the Chitpore Road with the Chowringhee to bring out the obscurantism and lethargy of Indians and the dynamism and energy of the Englishmen. Bharati's translation reads hardly like a translation, especially in the passage in which Tagore criticises the steam-roller power of the government, and with a

glint in his eye castigates the slave mentality of the people :

> Yaa Devi Rajyasane
> 'Prestige' Rupena Samsthitha
> Namastasyai, Namastasyai,
> Namastasyai Namo Namah

It is harmful for us all if with fear in our heart, and the word 'prestige' on our lips, we dare not bring to light of day the festering sores of corruption and immorality.

Yet another significant work of Tagore introduced by Bharati to the Tamil-speaking world was "The World Teacher'. This was a speech delivered by Tagore in Tokyo' Bharati believed that Tagore was an even more powerful exponent of our culture than Vivekananda, although both were remarkably successful as cultural ambassadors of India. He said : 'Vivekananda showed only the discipline of the spirit But Rabindra shows the foreign countries that "life in the world, true poetry and knowledge of the self are all parts of one Dharma".'

This is the very *Poorna dharma* made up of the way of works, devotion and knowledge. Speaking of Rabindranath Tagore, Bharati says—and we must remember that Bharati was writing half-a-century ago when little of Tagore was known in Tamil Nad : 'Many Japanese pundits realise that Bharat is the teacher of the world. But till now there was no opportunity to prove it by one of our great men in person. Rabindranath Tagore, the Mahakavi of Bengal, has now removed that deficiency. He is immensely fit for this job. His poetry is already receiving the attention of the world. Indeed, he has already been included in the number of the world's great poets. The few English translations of *Gitanjali* and other poems are but slender books. They are not heavy epics, nor big dramas. He has shown the world only a few stray lyrics. And the world has been struck with wonder. If ten or twelve precious gems were sold, would not one collect lakhs of rupees ? If ten pages of a divine work were revealed, would not the great poets of the world be taken up with them ?

After hailing Tagore's speeches on the role of India in Asia, Bharati culled the praises heaped upon Tagore by Japanese correspondents and made them known to Tamil Nad in a long article. This dedicated work on the part of Bharati in introducing

Tagore to Tamil Nad went indeed a long way in preparing the ground for the appreciation of Bengali literature by the Tamils. After Bharati scores of Tamilians learnt and began translating into Tamil a great variety of Bengali poetry and prose. At this point, I might mention with pardonable pride that the first full-length novel of Tagore to be translated into Tamil was *Yogayog*. About thirty years ago, my mother-in-law, Srimati Renganayaki Thatham, learnt Bengali at home and then rendered *Yogayog* into Tamil with the title *Kumudini*. The translation was enthusiastically received, and one of the results was that my mother-in-law, a popular short-story writer, and essayist, is now universally known to the millions only as 'Kumudini !'

Though it was in the course of his desk-job as a purveyor of current news that Subhramanya Bharati did the translations above referred to, he was also even more drawn to Tagore's creative literature. Bharati translated a few short stories of Tagore, and also some passages from *The Crescent Moon*. Bharati was of course himself well-known for the poetry he wrote for children. Naturally enough, he was attracted by the dawn of innocence shimmering in *The Crescent Moon*. Bharati thought that the spirit of the volume revealed that men should consider the Divine as mother, and play with her in angelic innocence and the purity of laughter just as a child does with its mother. His translation of the following passage comes to us as a new revelation, when we happen to read it in Bharati's mellifluous Tamil.

> The folk who live in water call out to me—
> 'We sing from morning till night; on and on
> we travel and know not where we pass.'
> I ask, 'But how am I to join you ?'
> They tell me, 'Come to the edge of the shore
> and stand with your eyes tight shut, and you
> will be carried out upon the waves.'
> I say, 'My mother always wants me at home
> in the evening—how can I leave her and go ?'
> Then they smile, dance and pass by.
> But I know a better game than that.
> I will be the waves and you will be a strange shore.
> I shall roll on and on, and break upon

your lap with laughter.
And no one in the world will know where we both are.

It was a pity that Bharati could not appreciate all the poetry of Tagore, as the bulk of it had not been translated into English in his life-time. And Bharati passed away at the early age of thirty-nine. But at least Bharati had read enough to hail Tagore as a Mahakavi again and again. In his poetry, too, Bharati referred to Tagore in superlative terms. And, again, it was his great reverence for Tagore that led Bharati to Mahatma Gandhi. His faith in the Mahakavi of Bengal was so great that he also accepted unconditionally Tagore's summing-up of Gandhi's unique personality. In *Bharata Mata Navaratna Malai*, there is a gem-like passage that extols Tagore for having shown the world the way to Gandhi's works.

Ravindra, the Kavindra
Who indited joyous poesy
Praised by the entire world,
Says : The one great man
Who rises above all mankind
Is Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi,
The image of eternal Dharma !

And it was Bharati who called the interest of Tamil Nad to Rabindranath's scheme for national education. Bharati revered Tagore's ideals the education of the Indian masses. Tagore decried in a forthright manner our blind imitation of Western education which tended to warp the Indian mind and empty it of all its creative energy and lively imagination. Bharati too felt in the same way, even went so far as to decry the teaching of subjects through a foreign language. Where was the need for so much borrowing, imitation and slavishness ? Have we not a great tradition, a wonderful culture, and a powerful historical stimulus ? Bharati was also in entire agreement with Tagore's projection of the educational system of future India. Tagore said : 'And this is why the inner spirit of India is calling to us to establish in this land great centres, where all her intellectual forces will gather for the purpose of creation, and all her resources of knowledge and thought, Eastern and Western, will unite in perfect harmony.

She is seeking for herself her modern Brahmavatara, her Mithila, of Janaka's time, her Ujjayini, of the time of Vikramaditya. She is seeking for the glorious opportunity when she will know her mind, and give her mind to the world to help in its progress; when she will be released from the chaos of scattered power and the inertness of borrowed acquisition.'

Another piece that Bharati translated into Tamil was Rabindranath's poem on 'National Education.' It refers to the glorious past of India, the purblind middle ages, and the myopic modern age, and hails the new light that is breaking all over India. Bharati was thus in many respects like Tagore. He was a great poet, and also a powerful thinker, writer and patriot. Besides, in one major portion of his poetic output, Bharati was specially indebted to Rabindranath Tagore. This was in the field of prose poetry.

It is true that imitation is seldom much of a help. Indeed, it often ends in an inglorious failure or a successful suicide. Keats is often hauled up as an example of the harmful effects of imitation. *Paradharma Bhayavahah*, as the *Gita* says. And yet, Tagore himself, when he consciously imitated Whitman, succeeded in opening up new possibilities for Indian poetry. Of course, even the poetry of the Vedic Rishis may be viewed as a sort of prose-poetry. Nowadays, prose-poetry is merely an easy way out for the modern poet. But Tagore was also well-trained in the traditional verse-forms. There was no question of 'ease in writing' when he turned to the technique of prose-poetry. Perhaps he was only getting tired of the limitation imposed upon his imagination by the traditional verse-forms. As he said in one of his poems :

My songs have put off their adornments.
They have no more desire for dress and decoration.
They mar our union;
They come between Thee and me;
Their jingle drowns thy whispers.

Very soon Tagore perfected this technique of prose-poetry. It took the form of an apparently endless monologue in which the speaker was the poet, and the listener was God, who was the subject as well, This spur to poetry, this source of all, was

variously termed as Jivan Devata, or Manasi, or Chitra, or Antaryami. When a selection of these graceful dramatic monologues appeared in English as *Gitanjali* and won the Nobel Prize, the world was stunned with a happy shock. Subhramanya Bharati too was influenced by Tagore's success. But he carefully reframed from blindly imitating Tagore's poetry. Bharati and Tagore both drew their main inspiration from India's heritage, but from different sources, or from different streams. Tagore went back to the Vaishnava lyricism of the middle ages. Bharati went back even further; he went to the poetry of the Vedic Rishis themselves. The language of both Tagore and Bharati has an effortless case, and flows with deceptive smoothness. Here, however, the similarity ends. Whereas Tagore appears as a gentle supplicant in his prose-poems, Bharati looms as a master of passion. Where Tagore is conversational, Bharati is descriptive. Tagore distils sweetness through the aching sadness of the heart, Bharati wrests joy through leaps of exultation. Tagore deals with the emotive content of man; Bharati enjoys the contours of Nature around him. Tagore welcomes pain so that it may bring together man and God, for this was the way the Vaishnava singers approached God—through a divine *viraha*. Here is Tagore in *Gitanjali* crystallising the divine sorrow of the Jivatman in its quest for union with the Paramatman :

> Death, thy servant, is at my door. He has crossed the unknown sea and brought thy call to my home.
>
> The night is dark and my heart is fearful :
> Yet I will take up the lamp, open my gates and bow to him my welcome. It is thy messenger who stands at my door.
>
> I will worship him with folded hands, and with tears. I will worship him placing at his feet the treasure of my heart.
>
> He will go back with his errand done, leaving a dark shadow on my morning; and in my desolate home only my forlorn self will remain as my last offering to thee.

Bharati, on the other hand, goes to nature and moves with abandon in a creative dance of ecstasy. The words leap and bound and explode in an atmosphere charged with a reverence

for life :

Life, who knows your fame ?
You are a visible godhead.
All laws are by you.
All laws are destroyed by you.
O life,
Thou art air, fire, earth, water, sky.
Of the visible things, thou art the forming spirit.
Thy work is to change the changeables.
The flying insect, the killer leopard,
The crawling vermin, the countless lives,
Of this earth, the countless beings,
Of the countless planets—
These are thy explanations.
We count the lives that fill the earth,
Water and sky.
In a square foot of air,
Lakhs of living agents swarm,
Unperceived by the human eye.
A big animal; in its body many smaller lives.
In them many more tiny lives;
Inside these even tinier forms—
Thus lives are scattered throughout this world.
The big—bigger than big—bigger than that—
Even larger than that—
Atom—smaller atom—smaller— even tinier—
No end to both sides. Eternity on each side.
O ye poets, let us as we rise in the morn,
praise all lives.
Namaste Vayo, Tvameva Pratyaksham Brahmasi.

Subhramanya Bharati's prose-poetry forms a precious niche in modern Tamil literature, and to a very great extent we have to thank Rabindranath Tagore for turning Bharati into this largely unexplored field of prose-poetry.

12

ROY AND TAGORE

NIRANJAN DHAR

Our nationalist leaders generally miss no opportunity to sing hallelujah to Tagore. They have even gone to the extent of elevating him to the high pedestal of their *gurudev*. But hypocritical that they are, it is all their lip reverence. Hardly they are known to have lent their willing ears to his precepts. Thus, they have completely ignored him while going to give shape to the free India. In this matter they could not muster courage to travel beyond the much-trodden paths of parliamentary democracy and soclialism even if in a diluted form. The panchayets and the cooperatives which they are now ushering in the country with so much fanfare are nothing but their caricature. Here recourse is being had exclusively to legislation to the utter neglect of the task of educating the people and developing their initiative. Our so-called leaders do not seem to see that it is easy-to impose from above. But the foundation of a structive thus built remains invariably weak. To build strongly we must build from below. No doubt, it is a difficult process. If we, however, can once motivate the people, the necessary momentum will automatically be created. It may take time to enkindle fire. But once enkindled, it spreads in no time.

Tagore advocated building from below. His social thought was very largely hinged upon his concept of a Swadeshi Samaj. He enolved this concept and popularised it in his numerous writings and speeches. Here he has drawn a clear distinction between the state and the society. The functions of the state

are to be very limited. Generally they are to remain confined to defence, maintenance of law and order and administration of justice. All other public activities ought to fall within the province of the society. It will consist of self-reliant people who will manage their own affairs in their own way without depending upon any external agency like the state. The village panchayets are to constitute the pivot of the social life. Tagore has, however emphasised time and again that this must not be construed to mean that the different societies will be like so many closed shops refusing to accept anything from outside.

Tagore was of opinion that such an arrangement for administering affairs is not only highly desirable but is also rooted in the history of the country. This is in sharp contrast with the tradition of the Western countries which, drawing their inspiration from ancient Greece and Rome, are extremely state-oriented. The strength of all civilisation does not lie in the same place. In the Western civilisation the state assumes the responsibility of undertaking all welfare deeds. For a Western country, therefore, the destruction of its state-apparatus spells out all-round demoralisation and disorganisation. In contrast with this, in India one government or one dynasty had been replaced by another Revolutions and conquests had taken place. But the society and, for the mattir of that, the life of the people remained almost unaffected.

The poet-thinker went on arguing that it is the English rule which had introduced into India English ideas. Thus a juxtaposition had been brought about in the relation between the society and the state here. The state got upperhand of the society. Consequently the latter was in a very moribund condition now. From now on the Indians started looking forward wistfully to the state for the satisfaction of almost all their vital needs. We had thus been brought to a very unhappy state of affairs.

It was admitted that the British authorities also introduced some sort of a local self-government throughout the length and breadth of this country. These officially sponsored institutions of self-government naturally lacked in the strength and vitality of the old panchayets which were created by the people themselves from below. The former functioned more or less as the

instruments of the power that be and thus remained largely foreign to the village-life. These institutions bred in the villages jealousy and incompetence. They did not unite the people. On the contrary, they divided them and created more problems than they solved. Accordiug to Rabindranath, the difficulty was not at all due to the fact that these new institutions of self-government were created by an alien authority. It did not matter much whether the sponsoring authority was alien or native so long the people themselves did not show their own initiative. So he issued a calrion-call to his countrymen to re-awaken their spirit of self-confidence and start again building from below.

M.N. Roy was a much abused man in the Indian nationalist circle. It is, however, in him and not in the nationalist leaders that Tagore, an avowed idol of the Indian nationalists, had a kindred spirit. Both the savants drank deep in the ideas of the European Renaissance and had great confidence in men. Like Rabindranath. Mahabendranath too had always spoken in favour of developing people's initiative and building from below. The role that Roy allotted to his people's committees is very much analogous to that allotted to the panchayets in the 'swadeshi samaj' of Tagore. It is true that Roy does not appear to have drawn any inspiration from the age-old Indian tradition of the panchayti system which is rather controversial in nature and for which he had not much regard. So far as Roy is concerned, his people's committees were but the Indian vision of the Russian Soviets. The Soviet came to be accidetally associated with the communist movement of Russia. They were subsequently put into cold storage, and the Communist Party arrogated to itself all state-powers. Roy, however, accorded a permanent place to the people's committees in his scheme of government because it was in keeping with the fundamental tenet of his thought—to build from below. In this connection we may say that Roy, in spite of him, has come to be associated with the panchayeti tradition of the country the soundness which may not be much justified historically but still which has a high image in the mind of the people themselves.

The essential similarity among these ideas of the two thinkers should not make us omit to see a very important point of difference too. Tagore hardly visualised any meeting ground

between the state and the society, each having its own demarcated area of operation. But Roy attributed to the state a function of coordinating the social activities in addition to such essential functions as defence, maintenance of law and order, etc. This difference largely stems from the fact that in depicting the ideal of a Swadeshi Samaj Tagore drew his main inspiration from the remote past of India. The unsophisticated society of those days had not much need for a coordinating agency. Besides, he might have unconsciously reacted against the state of his time which was being dominated by foreigners. As against this, Roy had no particular fascination for India's hoary past. The society he was writing for was immensely complex. The state he visualised was also a democratic state of an independent country. Roy had therefore, reasons to be less distrustful of it.

By viewing the state as an adjusting machinery Roy might stand on a somewhat different plane from that of Tagore. But here he was at one with many other political theorists. Still he was unique in dealing with a fundamental problem born of the nature of the state as a coordinating and adjusting machinery.

Because of its coordinating function the state has at its disposal a monopoly of the coercive power of the community. This power, unless kept under proper control, is likely to go arbitrary. Confronted with this problem some pluralists have sought to downgrade the state to the status of merely another association of the ordinary kind. This amounts to throwing away the baby along with the bath-water as it would destroy its very character as a coordinating machinery. Some pluralist thinkers like MacIver and Barker have of course reluctantly conceded a special status to the state and vested it with the coordinating authority. As a safeguard against abusing this authority they want that the state must exercise this function not at its sweet will but as an agent and organ of the society. For keeping the state-machinery so confined these pluralists have, however, no other panacea than depending upon the right sense of the society. Roy too looked upon the state as an organ of the society. In this respect his approach may be said to be pluralistic. But for keeping the state power under proper control Roy, however, did not spin his faith exclusively in the right sense of the community. He had further sought to provide

an institutional guarantee for it. He visualised that the possibility of the state-machinery functioning as an organ of the society would be greater if the entire socity could be politically organised into viable committees constituting the base of a state-apparatus and exercising constant vigilance and control over it.

In this connection Roy used an expression which has given rise to a good deal of misunderstanding among scholars. He has spoken of the state being "coterminous" with the society. Some scholars have found a Hegelian taint in it. What is called society is only "a society of societies". The state is only out of such societies. There are many others based on diverse interests of man. To permit the state to appropiate to itself the whole gamut of the social activities cannot but give rise to state absolutism.

This connection of the critics, so far as it goes, is right, no doubt. But they have entirely misunderstood Roy in this respect. The approach has to be made from the other side. What Roy has intended by making the state "coterminous" with the society is that it is the socity which will devour the state and not *vice-versa*. Roy has cared to see to the furthest limit possible that the state does not go beyond the control of the society. The "coterminousness" of the state with the society will, however, be in respect of political affairs only. It means that the base of the state-apparatus will embrace the entire country and its entire adult population will is to participate in its affairs. But *intensively* the richer life of the society will remain outside the reach of the state's arm. As a matter of fact. Roy allotted only a few specific functions to the state as such. This goes to imply that the state visualised by him will be *universal in extension* but *limited in depth*. The question thus no longer remains that of Raj *v.* Samaj, as has been formulated and posed by Tagore. The duality solved.

13

RABINDRANATH, YEATS AND THE MODERN CONFLICT

Arun Bhattacharjee

Rothenstein introduced W.B. Yeats to Rabindranath sometimes in the year 1912. By that time Yeats had established himself as a leading poet, even in England. His *Wind Among the Reeds,* and *In the Seven Woods* were written and the myth of Celtic twiling evoked in his poetry a lot of confusion and wonder. The mystery around his poetry led many of the critics at that time to believe that Years had unfolded in his poetry a wealth of hidden imagery drawn from the legends and folklore of Ireland. Yeats, too, knew that and tried, though unconsciouly to institute a new meaning in relation to Nature. Life and Tradition. And no wonder that, nursed in the fantasy of legends and dreams, he would be instantaneously moved to Rabindranath's *Gitanjali.* To him, these lyrics appeared not merely a message which, of course, great poets do convey, but unfolded, in the same way, a world of music and mysticism, expressed with a naive artistry. The beginning of the twentieth century saw great literary figures, great artists, great composers of Europe and the western mind was then striving towards a fullness and maturity in all direction of life; placidity, calmness and adherence to truth were the cherished ideals in art and literature. Rabindranath believed in and practised those ideals in his life and works as well. Yeats and other important personalities at that time found a true and searching analysis in those lyrics. Rabindranath was not accepted

in his native land, but his works gained immense popularity in Europe.

The first World War broke out in 1914. Peace treaty was signed in 1919; these five years entirely changed the course of cultural and moral history of Europe. Art and literature also underwent many new changes; new directions were sought for and many new movements culminated into literary doctrines. Yeats, for himself, looked straight into the life and society, that was undergoing great change under extreme social and economic pressure. In the beginning of the century he wrote :

Pale brows, still hands and dim air.
I had a beautiful friend
And dreamed that the old despair
Would end in love in the end :
She looked in my heart one day
And saw your image was there;
She has gone weeping away.

(*Wind Among the Reeds*)

This intense romantic melancholy took him to nostalgic world, but this world vanished completely in the 'twenties'. *The Tower* written in 1928 and his attitude to life by that time completely changed.

What shall I do with this absurdity—
O heart, O troubled heart—this caricature,
Decrepit age that has been tied to me
As to a dog's tail ?

* * * * * *

It seems that I must bid the Muse go pack,
Choose Plato and Plotinus for a friend
Until imagination, ear and eye,
Can be content with argument and deal
In abstract things; or be derided by
A sort of battered kettle at the heel

(*The Tower*)

Rabindranath, on the other hend, viewed life from an idealist's, point of view and believed in the unchanging moral

order and man's innate goodness. The social and moral changes that took place during these fateful years had no effect in his valuation, though he was conscious of the devastating changes the West was then undergoing through accumulation of power on the one hand, and technological advancement on the other. His poems, composed during those long years, from 1913 to 1930, did not reflect these vital changes. As a cosmopolitan humanist, he raised his voice against the tyranny and oppression, but the poet in him remained satisfied with the contemplation of beauty in nature and life. Possibly he had a message for mankind, but the intensity of passion and a kind of emotiveness were found wanting in his poems. In fact, those were poems of dedication and of love :

> 'What divine drink wouldst thou have, my God'
>
> (*Gitanjali*)
>
> Or
>
> 'Yes, I know, this is nothing but thy love'
>
> (*ibid*)

And when, years after, he translated some of his lately written poems, we find the same strain, same imagery, almost the same mood :

> 'The tree gazes in love at the beautiful shadow Who is his own and yet whom he never can grasp'
>
> Or
>
> 'Let my love, like sunlight, surround you
> and give you a freedom illumined'

W. B. Yeats was not a modernist in the sense Eliot is, but he matured in experience; his consciousness of the 'decrepit age' led him to question values. He never became sceptical, but the impression of age was there, Probably, this was the reason why, late in the twenties, he did not find Tagore's poems quite convincing.

In a series of letters written to Amiya Chakravarti, Rabindranath explained what he felt about new directions in poetry, but he could not accommodate those dissections and abnormalities in the estimation of a modern poet's view on life. He translated Eliot

and Pound, made himself acquainted with the trend of modern poetry, but refused to accept those movements as Dadaism or Surrealism in poetry. He was becoming conscious of a change as well as of a conflict, but his own concept did not change. He did not respond, in his own writings, specially poetry, to those 'broken heaps of images' drawn lavishly from the distortions of life. Possibly he did not find the apt imagery and so, took recourse to painting. If Tagore was not sufficiently modern as a poet, he was a forerunner of modernism in the field of painting.

Yet Rabindranath is great as a poet, even in the estimation of Yeats. When he says that "All great literature is created out of symbols ('Yeats met Mallarme in Paris and was instructed in the doctrines of symbolism by his friend Arthur Symons'); observations and statistics mean nothing; works of art which depend upon them can have no enduring value" (Edmund Wilson : Axel's Castle). We find Rabindranath corresponding truthfully to the literary ideals set forth above. The detailed and wonderful symbols strewn throughout those inimitable pieces of *Gitanjali* are like small pearls scattered over a garden. If he is great, his greatness would mean a noble understanding of life and a comprehensive attitude to Nature. But if he is modern, his modernism did not find any root in his long cherished ideals. He was aware of the conflicts, but he did not experience that 'antagonism between the actual world of industry, politics and science on the one hand and the imaginative poetic life on the other' (Edmund Wilson : W. B. Yeats). He was conscious of the romantic revolutionaries and not of the romantic decadents. What Mario Praz outlined in his illuminating book as the 'romantic agony' was but a preamble to modern poetry in general. Rabindranath looked as it from a distance, was conscious of the speed, distortion and ennui of modern civilization, but tried to remain at peace with himself, believing in man's innate goodness and hoping for a better and wiser humanity.

14

TAGORE, RECONCILER OF EAST AND WEST

MULK RAJ ANAND*

Of the early poets of our country, there were many whose poetry merely embellished the life of the feudal courts, giving delight and helping to pass the tedious hours. But, there were, some poets who considered poetry to be the total image of life and who were, therefore, rooted in reality. These letter like Valmiki, Kalidasa, Bhababhuti and the mediaeval saints Kabir, Nanak, Chandidas adopted a poetic attitude towards all experience. And thus not only their writing but their whole personal life assumed symbolical importance, reflecting their time as well as moulding it.

At the end of the feudalist eras of Indian history, and the beginning of the modern age, there was another poet who assumed a similar importance. That poet was Rabindranath Tagore.

Standing athwart across the 19th and early 20th centuries, his eighty years' life spanned the era of the conflict between Asia and Europe. But he did not submit to the conflict and content himself with writing panegyrics to the Indian princes or the English rulers of his time, but he encompassed the world from the vision of the poet seeking a certain harmony in the whole of human experience. And, surprisingly, during a time when the status of all poets had been reduced by the overwhelming power of the successful businessman and the politician. Tagore was accepted, almost throughout the world, on his own terms. That is to say, he succeeded in imposing the image of poetry on to the consciousness

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of his time. Endowed with a magnificently noble presence, his refined profile, with the Homeric beard, and his physical personality, had already been transformed by his poetic manner which sprang from the inner unquenchable faith which the poet had in his capacity to permeate the whole of experience through the deeper stirring of the rhythmic life. And the inward grace which radiated from him on to those with whom he came into contact, was the result of the passionate, uncompromising inclination of his personality towards poetic truth. That is why he is one of the few writers of India whose personal history has become the mental and emotional history of our own epoch. He was at once the inaugurator of the heightened consciousness of our age, even as he was its product. At any rate, we cannot understand the inner fabric of our relations with the outside world without understanding him—his humanist attitude towards basic conflict of East and West and his reconciliation of these two political concepts into a large mental perspective.

II

After the conquest and subjugation of India, the British power was busy consolidating its hold on the country, ever since 1857.

The British middle class represented the dynamic outlook of the industrial revolution, which was to reach its climax in the last quarter of the 19th century. The industrial revolution itself had been the product of previous important social and political changes in Great Britain. From the time of King John, when the first middle class, the Barons, succeeded in limiting the powers of the monarchy, by obtaining the *Magna Carta*, to the reign of Elizabeth I, when the new middle lords again asserted themselves, through the third middle-class Cromwellian revolution, and the later enclosure acts when much farm-land was brought into the orbit of the machine, the pace of advance had been achieved through the struggle among the classes. The machine civilization itself flourished by the exploitation of the working peoples and the mechanization of many facets of life, and so dire was the exploitation that, on the one hand, the working class fought back, and, on the other hand, the British intelligentsia, from Ruskin, Morris and Marx downwards, never forgot or forgave the excesses of the owning classes.

Speaking for India, Tagore said :

> In the West the national machinery of commerce and politics turns out nearly compressed bales of humanity with have their use and high market value; but they are bound in iron hoops, the labelled and separated off with scientific care and precision. Obviously God made man to be human; but this modern product has such marvellous square-cut finish, savouring of gigantic manufacture, but the Creator will find it difficult to recognize it as a thing of the spirit, and a creature made in His own divine image.

Those who allege that the British conquered India in a fit of absentmindedness ignore the tremendous force of the British middle classes of that time, who were driven to seek raw materials and markets for the finished goods they were producing and who organized themselves to satisfy their greed for worldly goods to the utmost. Also, the British rulers were seeking to pass on some of the gains of the empire to their own people in order to give them a stake in the total gains of the country. In this way, the burden of exploitation was passed on to the less technically developed peoples of distant lands and a semblance of prosperity given to the poor at home, at the same time as the doctrine of the 'white man's burden' was preached to the European peoples and the religion of Christianity made into a civilizing mission among the heathen.

Nor were the British rulers so disingenous as the mystical historians would like us to believe. They made large promises to the peoples of the Indian Empire that they were encouraging self-governing institutions among natives and promoting all those process which may lead the conquered populations to prosperity. What is more, they actually began some of those processes. By the Permanent Settlement Act of Bengal they vested private property in land in the peasantry, among whom, for thousands of years, there had been no private property in land, but only certain rights to till as much and as necessary, to graze the cattle on common lands and to gather fuel from the forests. They appointed the former tax-gatherers of the various local kings and of the Moghuls, as a new kind of landlord class to whom they gave vast *jagirs* of land and in whom they vested to right to collect revenue from the peasantry, a percentage of which was to be paid to the

Sarkar, while the rest was to be retained for the embellishment of their order. The 'Brown Barons', thus created, began to swallow up the small peasantry for non-payment of rent or interest and various usurious taxes and exactions, reducing the tenants to near serfdom. The expropriated peasantry became the potential proletariat.

Rabindranath Tagore put the implications of the whole process, without malice, in his book *Nationalism* :

> Through all the fights and intrigues and deceptions of her earlier history India had remained aloof. Because her homes, her fields, her temples of worship, her schools, where her teachers and students lived together in the atmosphere of simplicity and devotion and learning, her village self-government with its simple laws and peaceful administration —all these truly belonged to her. But her thrones were not her concern. They passed over her head like clouds, now tinged with purple gorgeousness, now black with the threat of thunder. Often they brought devastations in their wake, but they were like catastrophes of nature whose traces are soon forgotten.
>
> But this time it was different. It was not a mere drift over her surface of life,—drift of cavalry and foot soldiers, richly caparisoned elephants, white tents and canopies, strings of patient camels bearing loads of royalty, bands of kettle-drums and flutes, marble domes of mosques, places and tombs, like the bubbles of the foaming wine of extravagance; stories of treachery and loyal devotion, of changes of fortune, of dramatic surprises of fate. This time it was the Nation of the West driving its tentacles of machinery deep down into the soil.

The British entrepreneurs were not slow to see the possibilities of cheap labour in this vast unemployed mass of the expropriated peasantry. And, impetuously, they started the factory system in India. In this way, they sought to be nearer the raw materials, nearer the cheap labour and nearer the ultimate market they supplied.

Unfortunately, the Indian part of their industry soon threatened to cut the throat of the original British industries. And,

by a law of Parliament, they soon stopped the import of textiles from India into Great Britain. Also, they began to inhibit the industrial development of India.

Meanwhile, by introducing a central bureaucracy, the railway, road and postal system, they knit the country together and organized it as a vast dumping ground for the finished products of the home industry. As the Indian Empire could not be run without the aid of a native intelligentsia, an education system was promulgated to trains Indians sufficiently well in the English language to enable them to serve as clerks and subordinate officials under British tutelage. The exploitation was comprehensive, rigorous and sufficiently well organized to pay untold profits, dividends and pensions at home. It may be said that every second pint of beer and every third packet of Wood-bines accrued to the British people from the gains of the Indian Empire.

Incidential to this process, started by the centralized British-Indian State, there came certain benefits to India, some of which were intended, though most of them were not premeditated.

For one thing, India became united in a new kind of way through the Unitary System of Government and the extended communications system. And though the British officialdom in India did not consciously represent the enlightenment of the European renaissance, the very impact of the machine forms, of which they were the precursors, introduced these forces in our society which were to lead to the awareness, in the Indian intelligentsia, of India's servile position in the Empire and the necessity of the struggle for liberation from its yoke, not only politically but in the spiritual sphere where most of its surviving ancient values and way of life had been contemptuously ridiculed, if not destroyed altogether, through a perverted system of education.

III

Some of the most important Indian intellectuals were aware of the impact of the alien European power on India. Only as Rabindranath aptly put it : 'Wherever in Asia the people have received the true lesson of the West it is in spite of the Western nation.' Thus although the intellectuals belonged to the exalted middle class of Bengal, they tried to see the implications of British rule in India, not from their personal point of view but objectively

They did not merely react against the Sarkar, but began to act, positively, in favour of the values which the foreign rulers had not even thought about. For instance, they did not refuse to accept the British Indian system of education but wanted more intensive Western learning than was being imparted under the new scheme at the same time as they wanted the Eastern learning. Similarly, they were not against the other beneficent political and social aspects of English rule, but wished to have more thorough-going social reform. They did not try to throw out the religion of Christianity which had mainly come with the British, but they sought a synthesis of the best principles of Hinduism with Christianity. They were men of courage who refused to countenance either of the two popular attitudes. They rejected the sycophants who were for accepting everything brought by British Rule as a blessing. And they refused to side with those who said that 'Everything brought by British Rule was a curse.' They knew that India had fallen because of its inherent disunity and physical and moral weaknesses. On the other hand, they also saw through the expediency and cynicism of the allien rulers. They were well versed in Indian culture and knew that much of our heritage had become merely the repetition of certain *mantras*, recited by orthodoxy in order to will into itself enough strength. And they saw the dynamic behind Western science as the real cause of European supremacy.

They did not, however, forget that the scientific organizations vastly spreading in all directions are strengthening our power but not our humanity.' They recognized that the 'satisfaction of man's needs is a great thing', because 'it gives him freedom in the material world'. But they felt that 'the moral man remains behind. because it has to deal with the whole reality, not merely with the law of things, which is impersonal and, therefore, abstract.'

Among the pioneers who understood the whole drama, the name of Raja Rammohun Roy stands out in the front rank. In fact, he may be called the first Indian modernist. And he was to have tremendous effect on the mind of Rabindranath Tagore.

Rammohun Roy was born in an aristocratic Brahmin family, and early acquired Sanskrit, Persian and English education. Self-consciously independent in his outlook. he fearlessly entered into the controversies of the orientalists *versus* the progressives of that time and began to judge the best in both outlooks in order to

evolve a faith of his own.

'The ground which I took in all my controversies was not opposition to Brahmanism,' he wrote, 'but to a perversion of it. I endeavoured to show that the idolatry of the Brahmins was contrary to the practice of our ancestors, and the principles of the ancient books and authorities which they professed to revere and obey.'

Thus, the attitude of this great social reformer was a constructive one. He campaigned for the abolition of Sati, the burning of widows, and against Hindu idolatry. And, on the basis of the truths of Hinduism and Christianity, he founded the Brahmo Samaj which was to attract some of the most important thinking men in Bengal. He founded the first Indian newspaper and he was the first Indian to cross the Black Waters and proceed to England. He honoured the grant of a constitution to the Spanish people with a public dinner in Calcutta. And when, on his way to Europe, he saw a French boat carrying revolutionary flags, he asked to be allowed to visit the ship and honour a people who had established liberty, equality and fraternity.

The Tagore household was arrayed alongside Raja Rammohun Roy in founding the Brahmo Samaj. Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, the father of Rabindranath, was the first organizer of this movement and the flame of revolt against obscurantism was lit by him, though he himself reclined back in his old age to the Vedanta philosophy.

His son, Rabindranath Tagore, however, was to inherit the outlook of Raja Rammohun Roy more completely : 'We in India,' wrote Tagore, 'have occasion to bitterly blame our destiny. We have every reason to deplore our past and despair of our future, but at the same time we have a right to hope for the best when we know that Rammohun Roy has been born to us'.

IV

There is no doubt that by birth and education, Rabindranath Tagore was as favoured a son of India as Rammohun Roy. He had the added advantage of having grown up in an atmosphere in which the main points of the battle between East and West had been actively joined. Almost instinctively, as a youth he seems to have seized upon these main issues.

For instance, he refused to go to the British-Indian school, but imbibed all his knowledge through the momentum of his own curiosity and from what little his elder brothers and his father could teach him in their spare time. He has written tenderly of the freedom to roam about which he was allowed in his household. Also, of the complete equality and friendship which the older members of the family extended to him. During a visit to Dalhousie, his father taught him both Sanskrit and English and appeased his hunger for knowledge, without any kind of patronage. 'Since my childhood,' he recalled, 'I have regularly repeated the *slokas* from the *Upanishads* with ease and correct aecent. The prayer directed by my saintly father was peaceful, a pure abstraction.' And, along with this, he learned to love English literature and culture : 'The very atmosphere of our house was stimulated by the joyful appreciation of the Shakesperean Drama.' Beyond these two strains, he cultivated the 'enthusiasm for National Freedom', which had not, then, quite inherted in our country.

At the age of seventeen, he went to London, and studied literature for a while, under Prof. Henry Morley. The effect of his visit was to give him the necessary perspective to live in the spiritual worlds both of East and West without a sense of inferiority towards either.

The integration of his personality, however, had been proceeding through his alliance with poetry. 'The heart of men is composed of rhythm,' he said, but due to the times, under the pressure of the machine, its rhythm is at Present broken. This inherent rhythm he tried to sustain in almost everything he wrote, whether it was a poem, an article for a newspaper, a story, a novel or a play. And, as he wrote something everyday and upon every conceivable theme, the fundamental poetic approach remained constant. That is why, perhaps, he was able to move about not only among the folk of his own country, but among the sensitive and enlightened men of many countries of the world where he wandered.

He was convinced that :

> Man is eternally seeking life in a bigger, newer and truer form. The life man has expressed in his civilization has only been possible, because he has penetrated death.
>
> Take away man from his natural surroundings, from the

> fullness of his communal life, with all its living associations of beauty and love and social obligations, and you will be able to turn him into so many fragments of a machine for the production of wealth on a gigantic scale. Turn a tree into a log and it will burn for you, but it will never bear living flowers and fruit.

The process of realization of the romantic sense of glory was not late in coming into Rabindranath's consciousness. But as he matured quickly, he had, already before middle age, achieved a broadly humanistic outlook, with an inner sense, of which the sanctions lay in a deeply hidden creative force called by him 'The God of Life'. This was no sectarian God, but the divine element in all human experience. In fact, the spirit of history itself.

When somebody asked him. 'What is your religion ?' he wrote :

> What is generally called 'religion', I cannot say I have achieved within myself in a clear deep-rooted form. But there has been in my mind a steady onward growth of something alive which I have felt on many an occasion. It is not, by any means, a particular conception—but a deep awareness, a new awakening. I can see so well that I shall gradually be able to come to terms with myself ; that mingling my sorrows and joys, the within and without, my conduct and belief. I shall be able to give to my life a sense of wholeness . . . This never-dying mysterious relationship that exists between me and this infinite universe-life has a language—knowable and strangely manifest through the melody of colour and smell.

Again, he wrote about this creative force :

> . . . the force that has given one whole significance to all the joys, sorrows and incidents of my life, the force that is threading my death and various births into one continuity, and through which I can feel the unity with the created universe of all animate and inanimate objects, I have described as 'God of Life'.

This outlook expressed itself through the doctrine of nature

worship, love and the worship of man.

I have believed that the truth of man is in the Greater Man who linked in the hearts of the great masses. In the name of this Greater Man. I have dedicated my life-work, and have gathered the fruits of renunciations beyond the bound and bounds of the literary efforts that have been my passion since childhood . . . I have come into earth's great pilgrimage where, in the heart of the history of all countries, of all times—the supreme Man-God resides.

In this attitude, the affiliation of the poet with the inner rhythm of the world is defined. It was not an egoistical attitude in any sense of the word, but implicit in it was the belief that the world could not be saved by creativeness, by poetry : 'I behold beauty that is prosperity.'

It is the poet's job 'to inflame man's awareness with such love, to awaken him from indifference. The love wealth of man has been composed and gathered in the store-house of Art and literature in every country and in every age. In this wide world, it is from literature that we understand which people have come very close to the people of other countries. Through this love alone man can judge man.'

V

As the outer expression of this inner sense of conviction, he founded the Visva-Bharati (World University) at Santiniketan in Bolpur, Bengal. This place had been the refuge of his father and the playground of Rabindranath's boyhood. And it was appopriate that he should invite the youth of the world to come and share in the awakening of a new world consciousness here.

Naturally, so ambitions an ideal as that of Tagore to penetrate the world with the sense of rhythm, the equipoise of life, was bound to evoke criticism, jealousy and spite in the small-minded. And funds were not always easily available for this unique enterprise.

And when he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, though this had made may people happy, there were some who, in spite of the poet's modesty, denigrated him behind his back for his supposed arrogance and modernism.

On the other hand, he was soon to return the knighthood, which the British had conferred on him, in protest against the atrocities of General Dyer in Jallianwalla Bagh in Amritsar in 1919.

And while this allied him with the nationalist cause, his independence of mind was to bring him into contempt from the more chauvinist of the patriots. And while he enjoyed a profound friendship with Mahatma Gandhi, he had the courage to differ with him on certain principles. It may be said to the credit of both these giants, however, that they did not harbour any personal ill-feeling against each other because of their ideological divergences or differences of emphasis.

The essential approach of Rabindranath towards the emerging world had been, as we have shown, coloured very intensely by the positive outlook of Raja Rammohun Roy. Gandhiji happened to speak somewhat disparagingly of Tagore's mentor, and the poet answered :

> In the time of Rammohun Roy, the West had come to the East with a shock that caused panic in the heart of India. The natural cry was for exclusion. But this was the cry of fear, the cry of weakness, the cry of the dwarf. Through the great mind of Rammohun Roy, the true spirit of India asserted itself and accepted the West, not by the rejection of the soul of India, but by the comprehension of the soul of the West.

Further he wrote that Rammohun Roy was 'perfectly natural in his acceptance of the West, only because his education had been perfectly Eastern—he had the full inheritance of the Indian wisdom. He was never a school-boy of the West and, therefore, he had the dignity to be a friend of the West.'

In this lectures entitled *Nationalism* published during the First World War, he had warned the peoples of the world against the excessive cult of the nation. He felt that such a cult generally tended to become organized for aggression and hysteria. He always distinguished the nation from the people. For instance, he had said that the English nation was different from the English people, India had felt, as we feel, the sun, whereas the English nation had been a clogging and blinding mist.' On arrival in England once, he wrote to his friend C.F. Andrews : 'With all our grievances against the English nation, I cannot help loving

your country, which has given me some of my deares friends. I am intensely glad of this fact, for it is hateful to hate . . . The fact is that the best people in all countries find their affinity with one another . . . You yourself are a bearer of a lamp from your own land and let me in response light my own lamp with love for the great humanity revealed to your country.'

This attitude was not the attitude of a man who wishes to be above the battle, but who tried to distinguish and judge each concept and situation from the poet's vision of justice among mankind, and the necessity of bringing it together on the basis of inner understanding.

We in the East have to acknowledge our guilt and own that our sin has been as great, if not greater, when we insulted humanity by treating with utter disdain and cruelty men who belonged to a particular creed, colour or caste. It is really becasue we are afraid of our own weakness, which allows itself to be overcome by the sight of power, that we try to substitute for it another weakness which makes itself blind to the glories of the West. When we truly know the Europe which is great and good, we can affectively save ourselves from the Europe which is mean and grasping.

But this was not a fashionable attitude at that time.

A Gujrati poet, who was upset by Tagores's attitude towards current politics as a 'kind of mendicancy' wrote an open letter to him. In reply Rabindranath sent a note which is marked by an even more genuine grasp of the principles of non-violence than most people seemed to have cultivated :

> I believe in the efficacy of *Ahimsa* as the means of overcoming the congregated might of physical force on which the political power in all countries mainly rest. But like every other moral principle. *Ahimsa* has to spring from the depth of mind, and it must not be forced upon men from some outside appeal of urgent need. The great personalities of the world have preached love, forgiveness and non-violence primarily for the sake of spiritual perfection and not for the attainment of some immediate success in politics or similar departments of life. They were aware of the difficulty of their teaching being realized within a fixed period of time in a sudden and wholesale manner by men whose previous course of life had

chiefly pursued the course of self. No doubt through a strong compulsion of desire for some external result, men are capable of repressing their habitual inclinations for a limited time, but when it concerns an immense multitude of men of different traditions and stages of culture, and when the object for which such repression is exercised needs a prolonged period of struggle, complex in character, I cannot think it possible of attainment.

If he expected *Ahimsa* to be rooted in the real enlightenment, he also did not condone violence. In a little book entitled *Creative Unity*, published in 1922, he wrote :

Lately I went to visit some battlefields of France which had been devastated by war. The awful calm of desolation which still bore wrinkles of pain—death-struggles stiffened into ugly ridges— brought before my mind the vision of a huge demon, which had no shape, no meaning, yet had two arms that could strike and break and tear, a gaping mouth that could devour, and bulging brains that could conspire and plan. It was a purpose, which had a living body, but no complete humanity to temper it. Because it was passion—belonging to life, and yet not having the wholeness of life—it was the most terrible of life's enemies.

Again, with true pertinacity of instinct for the root causes of the evils brought by Western civilization, he said :

We have seen this great stream of civilization choking itself from debris carried by its innumerable channels. We have seen that with all its vaunted love of humanity, it has proved itself the greatest menace to Man, far worse than the sudden outbursts of nomadic barbarism from which man suffered in the early stages of history. We have seen that in spite of its boasted love of freedom, it has produced worse forms of slavery than ever was current in earlier societies—slavery whose chains are unbreakable, either because they are unseen, or because they assume the names and appearance of freedom. We have seen, under the spell of its gigantic sordidness, man losing faith in all the heroic ideals of life which made him great.

And he criticized this civilization in a clear and unmistakable manner, with the full authority of his responsible position as an 'unacknowledged legislator' :

> The political civilization which has sprung up from the soil of Europe and overrunning the whole world, like some prolific weed, is based upon exclusiveness. It is always watchful to keep the aliens at bay or to exterminate them. It is carnivours and cannibalistic in its tendencies, it feeds upon the resources of other peoples and tries to swallow their whole future. It is always afraid of other races achieving eminence, naming it as a peril, and tries to thwart all symptoms of greatness outside its own boundaries, forcing down races of men who are weaker, to be eternally fixed in their weakness. Before this political civilization came to its power and opened its hungry jaws wide enough to gulp down great continents of the earth, we had wars, pillages, changes of monarchy and conquest, miseries, but never such a sight of fearful and hopeless voracity, such wholesale feeding of nation upon nation, such huge machines for turning great portions of the earth into mince-meat, never such terrible jealousies all with their ugly teeth and claws ready for tearing open each others' vitals. This political civilization is scietific, not human. It is powerful because it concentrates all its forces upon one purpose, like a millionaire acquiring money at the cost of his soul. It betrays its trust, it weaves its meshes of lies without shame, it enshrines gigantic idols of greed in its temples, taking great pride in the costly ceremonials of its worship, calling this patriotism. And it can safely be prophesied that this cannot go on, for there is a moral law in this world which has its application both to individuals and to organized bodies of men.

All the same, he did not turn his back on the scientific achievements of the West. Only he felt that, while the great scientific revolution of Europe and America more than equalled India's contribution to religion and philosophy, India could supply a corrective to the misuse of science by the West. And that, in the present context, India could not do without the West and the West could not do without India.

> We are complementary to each other because of our different outlooks upon life which have given us different aspects of truth. Therefore, if it is true that the spirit of the West has come upon our fields in the guise of a storm, it is nevertheless scattering living seeds that are immoral. And when in India we become able to assimilate in our life what is permanent in Western civilization we shall be in a position to bring about a reconciliation of these two great worlds.

During his later years, he was, in fact, overwhelmingly oppressed by the poverty of the Indian people brought on by the exploitation of our resources in the interest of the alien rulers. And he turned to other theories of social justice than those of liberalism. Thus, though he did not ignore the defects of the Soviet system, he spoke feelingly, about its dynamic advance.

'I do not believe that the punitive rod is inactive in the present Russian regime.' he wrote in 1933, 'but at the same time education expands with extraordinary vigour.' And he paid a tribute to : 'the unstinted energy with which Soviet Russia was trying to fight disease and illiteracy, steadily liquidating ignorance any poverty and abject humiliation from the face of a vast continent.'

These judgments are only symbolic of the attitude of exaltation of creativeness which he came to hold, more and more uncompromisingly, towards the end. And he deplored the decay of poetry :

> In most of the Western countries today, it is noticeable how quickly men change their minds in the appreciation of literature and creative art. Speed is every day increasing in transport and conveyance. Speed is continually driving the heart and soul of man like a machine. But the life substance is not merely made of iron, to be run at frantic speed by electricity of steam. It has its inherent rhythm.

He felt that this rhythm was being broken not only in Europe but in Asia :

> The mechanism of this speed machine runs through the very heart of the Western countries. We cannot yet claim it for

ourselves with full credit. Nevertheless, we are already in the race. We have managed to jump on the foot-plate of the automobiles.

Obsessed by the mission of the poet, therefore, he insisted that a poet's job in literature is to produce the wealth of love for mankind, because love looks at the integrated whole. Love's own geniality is the only simple preface into which the poet's entire creation manifests itself in summaried vivid clarity.'

The symbol of all these inner images was the Visva-Bharati. And in explaining the aims of his World University, he also seems to have told us of his ethos of a genuine sense of world unity :

> To bring to realization the fundamental unity of the tendencies of different civilizations of Asia, thereby enabling the East to gain a full consciousness of its own spiritual purpose, the obscuration of which has been the chief obstacle in the way of a true co-operation of East and West, the great achievents of those mutually complementary civilization are alike necessary for Universal Culture in its completeness.

15

TAGORE AND INDIAN CULTURE

RUKMINI DEVI ARUNDALE*

Nothing that can be said or written about Rabindranath Tagore can convey the full significance of his personality. I feel that only another poet like Tagore himself could adequately describe him. When he was living, though I admired, appreciated and loved this great man. I never realized how much I would miss him after his passing. With him a great period has passed. There have been pioneers in religion, politics, social work and education in India during the last century, but there has been only one real pioneer in the field of Art. At a time when English education attempted completely to de-nationalize the educated citizens of this country, when Indian art was dying for want of encouragement by the State when Indian life was looked down upon as backward and inferior, there arose this great poet who brought pride in their culture to the hearts of the educated and hope to the hearts of the so-called uneducated.

Rabindranath Tagore alone knew the real value of education through the Arts and built up a centre where every boy and girl grew up in an atmosphere of exquisite Indian culture. He himself was the quintessence of that culture. In this world there are many types of pioneers and great workers, but there are few whom one might call real messengers with a divine purpose to accomplish on earth. To me he was such a one and for one like me who has similar feelings and ideas, who tries to help this

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country in the same way, though to a smaller extent, he was a torch bearer who showed the path of true Indian life.

I have had the good fortune to see him, meet him and to know something of his life. Except one rare occasions, he was the guest of Dr. Annie Besant and latter of Dr. George Arundale when in Madras. The first thing I felt when I saw him was the great beauty and dignity of his presence. In the descriptions of Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, the Lord Buddha and other great Teachers in our ancient books, the grace and beauty of their physical presence are extolled as the outward manifestation of the beauty of their spirit and teaching. That outward presence itself attracted humanity to them and that attraction was an easy means of approach to the human mind and heart. In the same way even in lesser personages, beauty becomes a helpful attribute to their mission in life. This was well proved in the personality of Tagore for whom Beauty was the expression of Truth.

Annie Besant in her way was exquisitely beautiful and majestic. To see the two together was an unforgettable experince. When Tagore came to Adyar, Dr. Besant, who had the greatest appreciation and admiration for him, received him with every honour possible. The very first occasion I saw him was with her under the great banyan tree at Adyar sitting side by side on a *chauki*. She paid him a magnificent tribute in her deep musical voice. Then he spoke and recited his poems. What a wonderful voice he had, sending through the audience waves upon waves of fragrant words ! At that time I did not know enough English, but I was deeply affected by the sincerity and beauty of his utterance. I was then presented to him by Dr. Besant. He stayed many days pervading the place with his music and his charm.

I am told that his Bengali writings and poetry are even more wonderful than their translations in English. Bengali is a most poetic language in which he was completely himself. I wonder, however, whether even India would have recognized him and given him the honour he received if he had not spoken and written in English. At one time when I travelled in foreign countries, I remember everywhere people were more conscious of him than even of Gandhiji or any other Indian. Tagore himself once said he was recognized in India only after he received the Nobel Prize. Even today we suffer from this mentality he then complained about. But for the translation of his most wonderful books into

English, he would probably have shared the fate of so many Indian scholars and great men and women who could not tianslate themselves so well into English.

It is indeed a blessing that he himself had Western education, for without it he would not have been able so well to show to India and the world the real nature and the true values of Indian culture. He believed fully in the Indian genius. Even though he did express his views on politics and took active part in the work for India's freedom, the best way he showed this independence of the Indian spirit was in the beauty of his poetry and in his educational work. He gave true Indian education to the young people in Santiniketan. They wore Indian clothes everywhere, sat on the floor and lived simple Indian lives. Art and education went hand in hand, he knew no one can be cilivized just by attempting to cram himself with knowledge.

Another beautiful aspect of his teaching was the emphasis on the home. In so many of his books he paints a picture of the simple Indian home with all the grace of village life, of the customs and the art that play a great part in the Indian home. While he painted picture of the village home, he also showed the uselessness and ugliness of certain outworn ideas, orthodoxies and customs. In fact he showed how one can be truly Indian in a real and spiritual sense even without certain things we consider to be important in our civilization.

In the home he elevated the Indian women for whom he had great regard. From my many meetings with him I could preceive that he had far greater admiration for the unsophisticated and uneducated women than for the modern girls who were becoming foreign to their country through wrong education and ideas.

Tagore was extremely sensitive to everything. I thing ugliness affected him like poison. He liked beautiful colours; he liked people to dress well. He even found it difficult to talk to people who had harsh voices. He was sensitive to crowds and noise, though he was often in the midst of crowds. He was also sensitive to nature, to the animals and birds. Like Tolstoy, who became a vagetarian when he saw a bull being taken to the slaughter house, Tagore was deeply moved when he saw some chickens struggling to escape from their slaughterer and became a vegetarian. I am not sure, however, whether he was able to continue to be one.

Since Tagore passed away and, soon after, we attained freedom as a nation. The West attracts us with a greater glamour than ever before. We also become Western in the wrong way. Tagore was Indian to his fingertips but he was no foreigner to the best of Western culture. He was universal in his ways and in understanding while remaining an Indian. No Englishmen, leaving aside great poets like Shelley, was as great a master of sensitive English as Tagore was. Today we wear more Western clothes, copy moye Western customs and habits though our knowledge of the English language has become poor. We are more conscious of Indian art, music, dance and drama but we have less culture in the home and less art in our daily lives. We furnish our houses in ugly Western style, appreciate ugly costumes and dances while we talk more art. This shows that we never understood Tagore, for to him life itself was a work of art. Art illumines daily life and when it is divorced from life, it is like a soulless shell.

Tagore gave new life to India through the arts and he gave an unusual quality to his dramas. When people witnessed those dramas, even where Bengali was not understood, they were subtly and unknowingly drawn into an atmosphere which left its mark on them. Even today there is a magic spell in these creations but during his time the spell was far more potent as he himself became a part of those productions as he sat on one side explaining his plays. Who can forget that experience !

In his earlier years he himself took part in his plays and the memory of his acting in *The Post Office* is still with some of us. Our sorrow is that the younger generation today has no one like him to look up to. One always hopes that a great person can train his successors. I am sure we are all mistaken in this idea. Successors have to be born and the only thing which can be done is to create the proper environment for them to grow in and opportunities for them to grasp. It was for this that Tagore created Santiniketan and wonderful artists like Nandalal Bose came to help him in this mission. But where are the successors ? If Tagore were alive today, I think he this would be unhappy, for I think there are even gaeater obstacles in the way of Indian culture than in the days of the British, because then we always believed that a foreign government was making us all foreign by compulsion.

Today we are voluntarily losing our faith in ourselves. We

may all sing *'jana-gana-mana'*, but can we sing it with the same devotion and faith that he had ? Can such words as

> Thou art the ruler of the minds of all people,
> Thou Dispenser of India's destiny,
> Thy name rouses the hearts
> of the Punjab, Sind, Gujrat and Marratha,
> of Dravid, Orissa and Bengal.
> It echoes in the hills of the Vindhyas and Himalayas,
> mingles in the music of Jumna and Ganges,
> and is chanted by the waves of the Indian Sea . . .

be sung by our hearts even if our tongues may not be inspired by Sarasvati as his was ? Where is the deep emotion which moves the lips to utter such words ?

Tagore translated the above for the benefit of the students of the Madanapalle Theosophical College, founded by Dr. Besant, when Dr. Cousins was its Principal. He sat amongst the students and personally taught *'jana-gana-mana'*, which was immediately taken down in staff notation by Mrs. Cousins who was an accomplished musician. I believe this is the most correct version available.

The last time I ever saw and met Tagore was when Dr. Arundale and I went to see him in Santiniketan a few months before his passing. I was giving dance performances all over India, but I went without any accompanists thinking he was too ill to see a performance. We were treated with utmost hospitality and very gently he asked if I would give a dance recital. I told him, I could not do so because of lack of accompaniments, but the request was repeated. I could not refuse and so I tried to teach one or two musicians in Santiniketan and gave two items of dance before a large audience in his home, 'Uttarayan'. I had to sing and dance as the young musicians could not manage to learn all that was wanted in so short a time. After the dance, Tagore, who was reclining on a *chauki*, called me to him, held my hands for a long time and showered me with praise and affection. He quoted from *Malavikagnimitra* and said he understood Kalidasa's idea of the greatness of the dance only then; also that he had never before appreciated Bharata Natya which he had seen once in Madras and that his opinion of the art had now changed. He

said more which was even more personal but to me it was as if a great sage had given his blessing for me to go ahead.

Strangely enough, my attitude to India, to Art and to the ideals of education is as if I had been brought up and taught by him and I fully believe what India needs today is what he tried to teach us. What we need to remember is his message which must find a great response in our hearts. Our hearts must move and be uplifted so that we see in this country the compassionate beauty of the motherland. If the Tagore centenary celebrations can bring into incarnation the invisible being of Tagore and reveal visibly the glory of our country, it would indeed be a celebration of love and rejoicing.

16

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IDEAS OF TAGORE

HUMAYUN KABIR*

In considering the social and political ideas of Rabindranath Tagore, the first thing which strikes one is that they were deeply influenced by his view of man and his place in the universe. Tagore was not orthodox in his religious views but his whole life was permeated by a deep sense of religion. His father was a devoted student of the *Upanishads* and the Sufi mystics. Quite early in life. Tagore imbibed from his father a deep sense of the unity of life. He has left on record how in his early youth he suddenly felt one day the deep bond of kinship with nature and man. This gave us one of his finest lyrics, but even more, it gave him the binding priuciple which dominated all his actions throughout his long life.

Indeed, all aspects of Tagore's life, thought and actions were dominated by his deep religious outlook. He had a vision of reality in which the supreme values were those of truth, beauty and goodness. His educational progrumme emphasized the harmony between nature and man and was derived from his consciousness of the unity that underlies all being. His regard for the individual in economics and politics was derived from the consciousness that all individuals are ultimately at one with the Absolute. His emphasis on co-operation among individuals and

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peoples was derived as much from his respect for different viewpoints as his feeling that all men are the children of God. He believed that clashes and conflicts arise only when we place undue emphasis on our sectional interests. When we rise to the consciousness of the unity of the universe, all sectional claims find their proper place. He believed that religion is the highest value of life because it emphasizes unity and love for all beings.

Tagore believed in the unity of the real enriched by the immense diversity of its manifestations. His conception of God was that of a unifying principle in which variety had its place rather than of a featureless unity in which all distinctions were lost. He held that the individual is unique and important and retains his identity even when he attains union with the godhead. He once told me that just as every cell in the human body has a distinct life of its own and yet shares in the corporate life of the body, each human being has his uniqueness and is at the same time a part of the divine personality. He added that if the cells in our bodies could become self-conscious and aware of their identity, this would perhaps give us the closest analogy to the relation of men and God.

With such a view of human personality, it is not surprising that Tagore was against regimentation or standardization of every type. He again and again declared that the whole country suffers whenever there is an attempt to suppress the personality of any group or individual within it. Similarly, the whole world is impoverished when any nation or group is denied the right of free and full self-development. Wherever the principle of respect and dignity of individuals and groups has been recognized, the result has been an immense gain for all concerned. Wherever, on the country, individuals and groups have been denied this recognition, the result has been disastrous for the oppressed and unfortunate for the oppressor. He was convinced that rights denied to say section are in the end denied to the entire community.

While Tagore placed the greatest emphasis on the freedom and dignity of the individual, he was equally conscious of his obligations to society. He drew a distinction between state and society, and held that one of the greatest achievements of ancient Indian culture had been to demarcate clearly their powers and

functions. Indian society had survived through many ups and downs of history because it had defined the welfare of society as largely a non-political function and placed it in the hands of the community rather than the State. According to Tagore, in Europe the centre of national life was located in the State while in India it was based on the community. In his view, this difference explains why political vicissitudes have led to far greater disturbances in social life on Europe than in India. By contrast, Indian life throughout the centuries has flowed comparatively undisturbed in spite of the vicissitudes of history and the changes in political power. The picture of the Indian peasant who went on tilling his land while rival armies fought on nearby fields was in Tagore's view a clear demonstration of the way in which society and state had been separated in the Indian conception.

Tagore believed and repeatedly declared that the caste system and its attendant practice of untouchability were among the darkest blots on Indian society. It had prevented the development of the Indian community into a unified and homogeneous whole and was a major cause of the misery and humiliation which India had suffered at various times. It was also inevitable that Tagore should feel keenly for the disabilities which women have suffered throughout the ages. There was perhaps no stronger champion of the cause of women, but at the same time he held that women have their own sphere and should complement the work of men rather than compete with them. There is a rare intensity of feeling and indignation in his writings whenever he spoke or wrote of the injustice and misery flowing from caste, untouchability or sex.

Once privileges are divorced from birth or status and related to the individual's contribution to society, Tagore was not averse to distinctions among individuals. He was a practical idealist who knew that men differ in capacity and character, and equality of opportunity is compatible with differences in achievement. In fact, he held that this was one of the devices which enable society to function in a healthy manner. He pointed out that in ancient and also in mediaeval India, social prestige was derived not so much from the favour of the king as from the social approbation which followed significant services to the community. He regretted the gradual disappearance of such social valuation

manner in modern India.

Tagore was a great believer in co-operation in every sphere of human life. He thought that the answer to India's poverty lay in the adoption of the co-operative method in production and distribution of every type and particularly in the field of Indian agriculture. He pointed out that the individual villager may be poor, but if many villagers pool their resources, they can easily accomplish take which are beyond their individual competence. He was thus, one of the earliest advocates of co-operative farming in India and declared that the principle of co-operation should flow over from economic channels into every sphere of the community's life. Society is itself a great co-operative endeavour and it is through co-operative that mankind has survived and triumphed over all other orders of living beings. He held that through co-operation, men and women can satisfy their economic needs as well as create conditions of social well-being and cultural progress.

Tagore believed that men require for their welfare not only the satisfation of their physical needs but also the satisfaction of their emotional and intellectual cravings. According to him, art is not a luxury for man. Human beings crave for beauty in every aspect of their life. A seven-foot high roof may be adequate for most men from the point of view of requirement of space but human beings feel unhappy in such a restricted room and design high vaults to satisfy their need for expansion and freedom. Culture is in Tagore's view that which adds to the dignity of life. At first sight, it may appear a superfluity, but it is a condition for survival itself. On one occasion he said that a solid piece of wood may be more valuable from the purely utilitarian point of view, but it is only when it has been scooped out and made hollow that it can produce music that satisfies the soul. In another context he said that the timber merchant may consider the blossoms superfluous and unnecessary, but should he therefore destroy the blossoms he would very soon have no timber to collect.

Tagore stood for a society in which individuals would find the fullest opportunity of self-expression through creative and co-opereative activities. There must not be great disparities in wealth power or social position its members. Each individual must be valued for this distinctive contribution to social life. All men

must work for their living but if for any reason is not able to maintain himself, the community must provide him with the necessities of life. In return, the individual must contribute to society to the limit of his capacity. The spontaneous self-expression of the individual would enrich the life of the community, and the expression of communal life would add to the fulfilment of the individual. Society would be truly organic and be greater than the total of the contribution of all its members.

II

Tagore's political views were a natural growth out of his religious and social ideals. With his faith in the freedom and equality of the individual, it was inevitable that he should be a democrat in his social, economic and political outlook. In the social sphere, he was a rigid opponent of caste. On economic issues, he held that wealth should not give any special privilege. In the political field, it was his conviction that there should be no discrimination based on religion, language or sex. His vision of India was of a federative commonwealth where men and women, speaking different languages, professing different religions following different customs and pursuing different avocations would have complete equality of opportunity and self-expression. In his basic political outlook, he was completely at one with the great tradition of liberalism which holds that that government is the best which governs ths least.

Tagore's belief in the freedom and dignity of man was derived from his religious faith and reinforced by his acceptance of the humanism which was the prevailing intellectual attitude of his younger days. He accepted without hesitation the western idea of democracy but to this he added the Indian conception of the individual's responsibility for social service. He greatly admired the Indian tradition under which the individual might win wealth and power through political patronage, but could win prestige and honour only from social approbation earned by social service. Freedom and creativity were for him two of the basic values of human life. Perhaps this was derived from his poetic temperament, for there can be no art without free creation. In social affairs, free creativity expresses itself in the individual's capacity to identify himself with the social whole. In politics,

local autonomy offers the greatest scope for such expression of freedom and creativity of the individual. His aversion against regimentation in any form was thus, partly the result of his own temperament and partly due to the impact of western liberal ideas imbibed in his early youth.

Tagore's concern for the individual made him suspicious of large organizations in the economic as well as the political sphere. In politics, he believed in a federal union of smaller autonomous units, for he held that they offered the individual the greatest opportunity of freedom and self-expression. In social and economic matters, he preferred smaller co-operative unions as he realized that the individual was likely to be submerged in the giant organizations that had grown up in the western world. He was anxious to introduce in India the latest techniques of western science while taking steps to retain the freedom and dignity of the individual man and woman. He was throughout his life guided by an integrated outlook that sought to achieve harmony and balance among the different elements that constitute Indian society. The same integral approach led him to combine tradition and experiment in his attempts to solve the problems of human life.

Tagore's faith in co-operation as the cure of individual and national poverty has already been mentioned. He held that through co-operation, we can also convert our individual weakness into political strength. He held that such co-operation in the political sphere can be best developed through local self-government. The individual finds fulfilment only when he is autonomous. The community flourishes when it is responsible for its own welfare. He believed in de-centralization of authority, for only in this way can human beings establish personal relationship with one another. A large organization inevitably brings in its wake an element of impersonality, and for Tagore there is no greater menace to human values than such impersonal and abstract relations.

Tagore was one of the earliest among our national leaders to declare that our political subjection was merely an outward expression of inner weakness. The roots of India's bondage lay in her neglect of the individual and her acceptance of a social system which had condemned millions of her children to indignity

British Government affect his respect for the British people. He wanted Indian political action to be based on a positive programme of national regeneration rather than a blind reaction against foreign rule. In the days of the Swadeshi Movement of 1906 and again in the height of the non-co-operation movement in 1920, he did not hesitate to express in the clearest terms his disapproval of certain aspects of the national political programme.

Tagore was a strong believer in the dignity of the individual and the value of freedom and initiative for all nations. It was his passionate belief that India's special contribution to human civilization lies in her exaltation of the principle of unity in diversity. He believed that differences are in themselves valuable and add to the richness of life. He also believed that there is a divine purpose in the diversity of languages, religions and cultures which are found in Indian life. He proclaimed that the unity of India has been and shall always be a unity in diversity in which every language, every religion and every culture shall have its due place. We can easily see how much more we need his outlook today if we are to avoid fatal conflicts among the nations which inhabit the modern world.

Recent history has amply justified Tagore's faith. Science and technology have brought into close contact peoples following differing economic and political systems. Different religious groups which were formerly geographically separated live today in close proximity and must learn to accommodate one another if the world is not to go up in flames. If these differences are allowed to lead to conflict, the results are bound to be disastrous for all. Tagore taught that these differences should not be suppressed but given their proper place in a larger whole. He pleaded for co-operation and not competition among different ideals. He may be said to have laid the foundation of the principle of co-existence of different ideologies which, it is being increasingly recognized, offers today the only hope for the survival of man.

The deep humanism and indeed the religious fervour which coloured his political attitude and belief is best seen in the song he wrote for a session of the Indian National Congress and which has today become the Indian National Anthem. In a sense, it is more a religious hymn for all mankind than a national

anthem for any one country. Tagore begins with an invocation to the Lord of the hearts of all the peoples of the world and sings the praise of the eternal charioteer who has guided man through the ups and downs of history. He seeks welfare not for India alone but for the entire world. He sings of endeavour and the co-operative reconstruction of human society in which every individual will be guaranteed the dignity and the rights of a civilized man in a civilized world. The Indian National Anthem, which is one of Tagore's greatest gifts of India, thus, reflects his ideal of a world where there will be friendship and co-operation among all men and mutual regard and respect among all peoples. It sums up in magic words his social and political ideals and expresses his deep concern for the freedom and dignity of the individual in a world whose unity and harmony depend as much on the efforts of man as the dispensations of Providence.

17

THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

A.H. SOMJEE*

Innumerable difficulties are experienced when one tries to examine the ideas of Tagore with a view to finding out his political philosophy. In this connection sometimes one faces a basic question, namely, whether or not Tagore had a political philosophy. In support of the contention that he did not have a political philosophy, so many arguments are put forward. Some of them may be stated as follows : that Tagore was essentially a poet and he neither had the temperament nor the logical consistency of a political philosopher; that his use of the terms, such as, freedom, society, nation, nationality, etc., was vague and often misleading; that he was *drawn* into politics and was forced to come out with some political statements and addresses by sheer force of circumstances.

While there is a great deal of strength in such arguments, I believe, they are largely the products of an attempt to consider Tagore's political views and writings on their face-value. Much more of significance to students of political philosophy emerges from them when they are considered against the background of his views on moral philosophy, metaphysics, civilizations and above all the moral and political dilemmas that he confronted as a writer of great understanding and influence.

Off and on Tagore used to be involved in political events of

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great importance, such as, the partition of Bengal, the Jallianwala Bagh incident, etc. A towering personality such as his could not possibly keep itself out of the main stream of national struggle for independence. His utterances at such occasions. which are mixed with a good deal of raw emotion, are, I believe, not as helpful in understanding his political mind as his speeches, addresses delivered outside the country and his literary writings of different stages reflecting different problems which agitated his mind.

In a sense the political thinking of Tagore belongs to the same intellectual tradition as the political ideas of Gandhiji and Nehru. They all are persons of great gifts. They all wrote a great deal on a variety of subjects. While Tagore's main profession remained that of thinking and writing, what Gandhiji or Nehru wrote is perhaps not of such a high quality. As opposed to Tagore they were far too deeply involved in the struggle for independence. They all reflected on the political problems of their time. They all wanted their political thinking to help them in their fight against the foreign rulers. While doing that they all derived strength and inspiration from India's past. They however did not appeal to the same source. And that, I believe, was largely responsible for their vastly different political thinking. Tagore, for instance appealed to the Indian culture with its underlying moral ideas. Gandhiji to our moral and religious experience. And Nehru went back to Indian history. The net result of all this was a diversity in their political thinking and conclusions.

Appeal to history took Nehru outside the framework of ideas which may strictly be said to be *Indian*. In his political thinking one, therefore, finds a great deal of non-Indian element. His emphasis on industrialization, standard of living, planning, welfare state, socialistic pattern of society etc., along with his pride in India's contribution to human civilization may be cited as an instance. Consequently, of the three, Nehru remains the least native in his ideas.

Gandhiji on the other hand had a great sympathy for the ideas of Ruskin, Tolstoy, etc. and was a good student of the Bible. His attraction towards them was restricted to the undercurrent of religious humanism in them. In that sense, therefore, Mahatmaji remained more concerned with religious humanism as such rather than the country or countries from which it came.

As opposed to Nehru and Gandhiji, Tagore, to a great extent,

a postscript to his *Autobiography* narrating his experiences as the first Prime Minister of free India, I have a feeling that he would, in all probability, maintain that India which is groping in the unfamiliar ways of democracy, trying to industrialise itself and bring about a greater measure of social justice to its people and is also trying to play a role of a patient conciliator in this tense and angry world, has enabled him to overcome, to a great extent. his feeling of rootlessness. For Nehru's India is certainly different from the one in which he walked into from Cambridge.

As opposed to that Gandhiji was easily able to identify himself with the religious traditions of this country. He could even identify himself with other countries where such traditions existed and was happy about it. His humanism was religious in character and to that extent somewhat rigid. Nevertheless, he did not find any difficulty in discerning the humanistic unity of all religions in this country and elsewhere. The problem of rootlessness or being out of tune with the social and cultural milieu, for him, in spite of the fact that he too lived through a period of great changes like Tagore and Nehru, did not exist.

The story of Tagore's search for cultural roots is quite different. It had a great bearing on this thinking and creative work. While the broader question of inability to identify himself with a country did not arise in his case what he painfully experienced instead was the dissolution of the pre-British Indian culture.

When Tagore came to age, the British rule in Bengal was pretty old. It had tried its hand at commerce conquest reorganization of the judicial and educational system, social reforms, etc. The impact of its ideas, however, was not felt so strongly until after the mutiny. In the field of politics, religion and culture, thinking men in this country experienced some sort of a disorganization of the traditional structure of ideas and beliefs. They reacted to this in three different ways. Some tried to shield themselves completely from the new ideas by continuing their old ways of living and thinking. Others went all out to embrace the British ways of living and thinking. They did not hesitate to look down upon all that was Indian. Still there was another section which considered its introduction to European culture and ideas as a great challenge. It made them conscious of the stagnation and the lack of living element in their own culture. The whole of

Tagore family belonged to this section. It took up the challenge in the field of religion, culture, education and politics. "This movement," said Tagore, "had its leaders in my own family, in my brothers and cousins, and they stood up to save people's mind from being insulted or ignored. . ." Further, "we had to build our own world with our own thoughts and energy of mind. We had to build it from the foundation, and therefore, had to seek the foundation that was firm"[1].

Very early in his career as a thinker and a writer Tagore had observed the various reactions to the period of transition which had resulted under the impact of European ideas. People of his generation could not help noticing it. What had got disorganized under the force of new ideas had not completely gone out of people's minds. And yet the attraction of what was new was indeed very great. Even in their mode of living a perceptible change was beginning to take place enough to make them feel nostalgic and culturally rootless. So deep was this experience that even at the age of seventy, Tagore could vividly describe it in the following words :

> "I came to a world in which the modern city-bred spirit of progress had just begun driving its triumphal car over the luscious green life of one ancient community. Though the trampling process was almost complete round me, yet the wailing cry of the past was still lingering over the wreckage. Often I listened to my eldest brother describing with the poignancy of a hopeless regret a society hospitable, sweet with the old world aroma of natural kindliness, full of simple faith and the ceremonial-poetry of life. But all this was vanishing shadow behind me in the dusky golden haze of a twilight horizon—the all-pervading fact around my boyhood being the modern city newly built by a company of Western traders and the spirit of the modern time seeking its unaccustomed entrance into our life, stumbling against countless anamolies."[2]

Here then was the material for the poet to dramatise by pointing out that he was born at a time when the old attitudes and ideas were in the process of dissolution and the new were not acceptable to everyone. But Tagore chose not to dwell on that.

Instead of making cultural void a theme of his poetry and thinking he plunged himself heart and soul, in the task of bringing about a cultural revival in the face of the challenging European ideas. He, in the words, recreated the cultural soil so as to be able to strike his own roots in it.

Something of this nature was afoot before Tagore started participating in it. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was attacking the religious orthodoxy, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was bringing literature close to the living realities and the political movement was acquiring a definite shape and clarity with regards to the ideals of freedom. To these Tagore added his own effort of regenerating Indian culture so as to restore our faith in ourselves which was very much shaken in the hour of our political defeat. The political philosophy of Tagore. I submit, is a part of this comprehensive and ambitious effort. It can be fruitfully studied with the help of the following five basic thems : Advaitam or Unity: Harmony or the Accommodation of the diverse elements : Subordination of the Material and the Political; Society and the State; and the "Eastern Mind". Let us now consider each of them in some detail :

1. ADVAITAM OR UNITY

Tagore developed his views on Unity by pointing out that it is the central principle in the birth of the human species and its creative faculty. The "Spirit of Life", the existence of which is postulated to be independent and wider than human life, went through, in the history of creation, a series of experiments. Finally it arrived at a peculiar Form, namely, the "Form in man." Unity between the "Spirit of Life" and the "Form in man" was thus, reached. Their Unity was then able to embark upon a career of freedom. Freedom not from something, but freedom to create.[3]

The very demand for freedom is the product of what Tagore calls the surplus energy in man. Biologically speaking, man has more energy than he needs for his physical survival. The surplus enegy is, therefore, utilised in create pursuits. All our material and spiritual creations owe their existence in this fact of surplus energy. In a sense, therefore, the surplus energy is the precondition of our enjoyment and realisation of freedom.[4]

Apart from the availability of the surplus energy at the

physical level, which makes our creative pursuits possible, there is an inexhaustible source of energy within all of us. This source we are able to tap when we reach some sort of a conscious Unity between ourselves and the supreme principle which is implicit in the whole creation. When the Unity of such a variety, which may be called Religious, Spiritual or Aesthetic Unity, is reached, endless joy is the result. Such a Unity or what Tagore calls Advaitam, then becomes the source of *Anandam* or joy.

The idea of Unity occupies a central place in Tagore's philosophy. It, however, does not result in an organic approach in his social and political philosophy as it does in the case of Hegel. Unlike Hegel, Tagore was not a system-builder. He neither had the temperament nor the equipment of system-builder. Consequently, the principle of Unity which he expounds in his philosophy remains untranslatable into its political counterpart. It merely remains as a guide to higher experience of man.

Such an emphasis on Unity, however, indirectly leads to an emphasis on *individual* who is the centre of the experience of Unity. *Individual* seeking the experience of Unity and embarking upon a career of freedom through creative work, therefore, becomes the starting point of Tagore's political philosophy. The individual pursuing his own ends or salvation is no doubt a common feature of Indian religious and philosophical thinking. With Tagore however, the base is different. Since individuals realise their freedom, through their creative pursuits, these pursuits have their repercussions in the social field. Social aspect of the creative pursuits of the individual, therefore, cannot be ignored. This, therefore, brings us to the second point in his political philosophy. namely, the harmony of different situations and approaches.

2. HARMONY OR THE ACCOMMODATION OF DIVERSE ELEMENTS

Having emphasized the attainment of freedom through creative pursuits in one's capacity as an individual, Tagore, then goes on to emphasize a higher realm of freedom which is realised in co-operation with other individuals. The undying tradition of "fulfilment through our harmony with all things" in Indian philosophy, says Tagore, had left a deep impression on his mind. For him, "freedom in the sense of independence has no content,

and, therefore, no meaning. Perfect freedom lies in the perfect harmony of relationship, which we realise in this world, not through our response to it in knowing but in living."[5] In other words, freedon attained through one's creative pursuits is not high enough. Higher than that is the freedom attained in the social field in co-operation with our fellow being.

Freedom in social realm is attained with the help of "sympathy" with others. Sympathy, therefore, becomes an instrument of integration with a world wider than one's own. It helps us to integrate ourselves with the ever-widening circle of human communities reaching right upto humanity as a whole.

Historically speaking, social integration has been one of the greatest problems in this country. Diverse races pursuing diverse occupations had to be accommodated within a single social system. This gave birth to the idea of caste system in this country. But soon, says Tagore, the element of sympathy disappeared from it. It, therefore, became an instrument in the hands of a few to maintain their privileges and exploit the rest. Due to the lack of sympathy between the various segments of our society, we lost our freedom in the social field long before we lost it politically. If we had succeeded in accommodating diverse social groups in our society, with due sympathy and justice to each one of them, our experience would have been useful to the humanity as a whole. For at the global level the problem is, more or less, of the same nature, namely, that of accommodation of diverse elements within a single global system. What we are practising today towards certain social groups in this country, by putting them to a position of social disadvantage and humiliation, the imperialist nations are practising toward the subject nations. The problem of accommodation of diverse elements is, therefore, a national as well as an international problem.

3. SOCIETY AND THE STATE

Tagore had an interesting conception of *Society* which he carefully distinguished from *the State.* He believed that the character of activity which each of them permits in its domain is basically different. His emphasis on the functions of society was in a sense similar to that of Marx or of the political pluralists. Like them he blieved in the need to make a distinction between

Society and the State. Like them he also believed in the need to restrict the invasion of the State on the territory of Society. While Marx believed in the ultimate socialistic instrumentality of the State at the hands of Society, Tagore remained averse to entrusting it with functions which are already performed by Society.

Tagore was aware of the fact that everything was not all right within Society and that its functioning was not always smooth nor the administration of its segments full of justice. Still he thought that it remained a realm of voluntary activity, of greater degree of moral choices and hence of freedom. Anything which passed from Society to the State, meant in ultimate analysis, a loss of freedom. As he put it :

> "Whatever we may seek from the former (the State) must be paid out of our freedom. From whichever of its duties our Society seeks relief by getting it done by the State to the extent will it be disabled with an incapability which was not of its essence in the past."[6]

Tagore's emphasis on the preservation of Society's existing functions was indeed very great. He, not only pleaded for it on the ground of freedom but also on the ground of what is best suited to our own genius. As he says :

> "The source of strength in Europe is the State. The State has taken upon itself the responsibility of discharging all welfare efforts—the State distributes alms, the State imparts education, the State looks to the preservation of religion. Therefore, the best way open to the European civilization in the matter of saving it from internal erosion and attack from without is to strengthen, activise and energise State rule. In our country Society is the source of our welfare. It pervades our society under the clock of religion. Consequently, India has so long considered the preservation of her religion, her society, as the only way of self-protection. India has not cast a look at kingdom; she has looked at her Society. Hence freedom in Society is India's real freedom."[7]

4. SUBORDINATION ON THE MATERIAL AND THE POLITICAL

Among his social and political ideas Tagore's plea for the subordination of the material and the political aspects of society is about the strongest. He believed that these two aspects, when remaining unchecked, tend to vitiate the harmonious spirit of social existence and deflect social energies in the direction of corrupt political professionalism, ruthless imperialist expansion and the exploitation of the weak. Tagore used the term 'Nation' in order to indicate this phenomenon. For him the term 'Nation' stands for "an intense consciousness of self-interest concentrated in political organization."[8] Further, the 'Nation' is concerned more with the material and political aspects of society rather than with anything else. He believed that there are two aspects of a people : "its religion, arts, literature, traditions of social responsibility and co-operation" on the one hand, and "material wealth and power" on the other. Out of these two, the 'Nation' is merely concerned with the latter. It is "the presiding genius of material department of the people."[9] Tagore in other words, restricted his use the term 'Nation' to imperialist nations only. He did not use the term in context of subject nations rallying their strength by appealing to their past glories.

Every society has its economic needs to be satisfied. But when they get overemphasized lot of evils begin to appear in it. The politics of such a society falls into the hands of professional politicians whose business it is to exaggerate the wants of the community. They, thus, find an excuse for converting the political organization of the community into a machine for external conquests. No country would turn imperiastic, according to Tagore, if its natural requirements and politics are subjected to healthy restrians.

An imperialist 'Nation' does a great deal of harm to its own people as well as to people whom it subjugates. In its own country, since it artificially inflates people's requirements, it brings about a perversion of normal forms of social relationships. It produces professionalism in place of spontaneous activity; officialism in place of voluntry activity; and egoism and conceit in place of co-operation and sympathy. In short, it succeeds in doing as much harm, at the moral and social level, to its own people as

it does to the people it conquers.

The harm done to the people it subjugates, in sum total, is indeed greater. Apart from their economic exploitation, they begin to stagnate under its rule. All their creative urges are either denied an expression or distored in their effort to prove something or the other in the eyes of their arrogant rulers. What is worse, and heie I think Tagore has made an interesting point, all their creative pursuits come to acquire a political orientation.

Tagore himself remained very conscious of this danger. Such an approach, he thought, would bring about an invasion of politics on all forms of our creative activity. It would destroy its spontaneity and make it tendentious.

We are now, in free India, going through the nemesis of the invasion of politics which we allowed on our creative pursuits during our freedom struggle. We now do not confine politics to the political field only. We carry it everywhere. And Tagore with his great foresight was able to see it and warn us of the coming event.

Tagore was one of the few healthy critics of slogans, negative attitudes, political expediencies, etc., of Indian nationalists. He could not be convinced of the efficacy of *charkha* as a symbol. For the non-co-operation and swadeshi movements were far too negative in character. These movements appealed to an emotion, which, he thought, could easily be carried to the persecution of the non-conformist. Above all he believed that political expediencies could not be morally justified. Moral values retained their imperative character irrespective of political conditions. One of his well thought out and carfully planed novels, namely, *The Home and the World* (1920) was devoted to the task of presenting political situations of those days in this country which were riddled with moral dilemmas.

5. THE EASTERN MIND

The arrogance and cultural conceit of the British rulers in India not only plunged Tagore in the task of reviving Indian culture but also made him Asia-conscious. Whenever he visited Asian countries, such as, China and Japan, he tried to point that they all belonged to one civilization and that they had what called "the Eastern Mind" and that their civilization was in no way

inferior to the European civilization. While he invariably spoke of the "solidarity of Asians" and "the dignity of Eastern Mind" he never fully developed these themes.

Tagore felt that Asian countries were not only bound together by history and geography but also by common problems of colonialism economic backwardness and the need to vindicate their honour as civilized people. Asian countries, he thought, were slowly waking up from their deep slumbers. And their awakening was symbolised by the achievements of Japan. The rise of Japan, but not its subsequent imperialism, was therefore, a source of great consolation to Tagore.

Asian countries were no doubt desperately engaged in driving out their foreign rulers but in that process they must not break into a political hysteria and resort to violence. Such an attitude. Tagore thought, would not be in keeping with the traditions of the East. The East had the ideal of "love the enemy" and it is going to stick to it. It also has the ideals of non-killing and non-violence which, Tagore said, they must practise not at the individual level only but also at the national level.

The Western civilization produced science and technology. They both are remarkable feats of human intellect. The Western humanity, however, has yet to prove that it deserved them. While made progress in the field of science and technology, it ceased to grow morally. It has now created gigantic organizations against which the individual is powerless. It has organized violence to such an extent that now it is threatening the very existence of man.

Tagore felt very depressed with the outbreak of the Second Great War. He expressed his sorrow in his *Crisis of Civilization* which was written shortly before his death. In it he had praised Britain for having given shelter to war refugees. He praised the Soviet Union for her remarkable achievement of industrialization and abolition of illiteracy and poverty. But on the whole he felt that light was going out of Europe. That Europe had prepared for this crisis for centuries and at last it had come. After this crisis human civilization would no dobt rise again. But this time its leaders would be the people of the East with their ideals of spiritualism. He, however, did not live to see the decline of Western imperialism from countries of Asia and Africa and the humanitarian approach of some of them towards countries which

they had ruled and exploited.

Tagore, to sum up, tried to base his political philosophy on the foundation of social and moral traditions of this country. He was aware of their shortcomings but he believed that since they were suited to our genius they must not be given up. His political philosophy helped us to raise our morale during the grim days of our freedom struggle. It also helped us to restore the vanishing moral dimension in our political values.

Notes and References

1. *Talks in China*, pp. 28 and 29.
2. *The Religion of Man*, pp. 170-71.
3. *Passim*, pp. 35-38.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
6. Sachine Sen, *The Political Thought of Tagore*, p. 74.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
8. Anthony Soares (Ed.), *Lectures and Addresses*, p. 127.
9. *The Religion of Man*, pp. 128-9.

18

POLITICAL APPROACH OF TAGORE

G.P. BHATTACHARJEE

A critical discussion of the political philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore today has not simply an academic significance but also of great utilitarian value. In his political philosophy there are many ideas and values which can be applied even to the present political condition of India.

Tagore was fully conscious of the rich cultural heritage of India's past as well as the revolutionary significance of the British conquest of India. On the eve of the British conquest India was suffering from utter social degeneration and cultural stagnation. India, according to the poet, lost her independence because of her own weakness and he compared the foreign rule in our county not with a burden upon the head but with headache, that is, the symptom of an internal disease. The way only to independence, therefore, was to remove those weaknesses which would deprive the foreign rule in India of any basis. To bring about an all-round social, cultural and spiritual renaisance in India. Rabindranath welcomed the English language and Western education. To the poet the fight for independence. He fought against the cause of national degeneration as he understood it and not against the symptom.

Here it is worth mentioning that the ideal of the poet, was not simply national independence but a much broader one, namely, the freedom of man. An ideology which considers the interest of the Nation as the supreme value and ignores all considerations of humanity and morality was un-hesitatingly and boldly rejected by

intoxic... en he raised his voice against predatory nationalism a succe... in the Imperial University of Tokyo in 1916, the radical... much offended and criticised Tagore as the poet of The po... tion. Yes, he was the unconquarable man of a exciten... n. He stood for the unfoldment of the infinite end. ... inherent in man irrespective of his religion or people... Internally, nationalism, the poet noted, stands for cool a... nothering the individuality of men and women. He

T... t the ideal of nationalism may take the form of that of ... perialism in India and, in 1918. in a letter to techni... ndhi, about the introduction of Hindi language in *chark*... gs of the National Congress, he wrote : "Hindi will Move... in optional in our national proceedings until a new tried t... politicians fully alive to its importance pave the way throu... general use by constant practice as a voluntary of s... a national obligation." In international relations signif... id that nationalism leads to national rivalry and cloth ... goes against the spirit of genuine co-operation which, oppo... the poet, is the only lever to progress.

rule ... eness of the dangers of nationalism made Rabindra- consi... of individual freedom and humanism. In a letter devel... in 1920 he wrote, we must make room for Man, the consi... age, and let not the Nation of this age obstruct his peop... another occasion he said, "The complete man must foreig... ificed to the patriotic man or even to the merely the c... ". This humanist outlook made the political with ... f Tagore free from all national hatred and jingoism of ... m a prophet of the ideal of interdependence.

outl... the background of this general philosophical outlook indep... le to appreciate the political views which the poet way ... n relation to India's fight for freedom. He tried to thou... a from the yoke of British Imperialism, no doubt, and was ... d the national independence as a means to freedom diffe... ıs. He did not believe in the efficacy of the politics ...nd petitions. The most effective weapon to fight thor... erialism, according to the poet, was the education and with... of the people. Education would enable the people poli... their inherent qualities, stand upon their own legs and org... ld prepare them for freedom. The ideal of individual em... Tagore did not lead to isolated and atomised

individualism but to co-operation and organisation. He discovered that the main spring of all social progress lay in human co-operation and mutual aid. He, therefore, tried to organise "Palli Samiti" in every village with the idea that they would solve all the problems of the village like education, transport, agriculture, litigation, etc., Rabindranath always discouraged the idea of looking to the State for the solution of all the problems of the people. He differentiated the society from the State and stood for the solution of the local problems by the local *samities* of the people. He considered the Leviathan States as a great danger to the freedom of man and he tried to develop in India a social order which would not absolutely depend upon the State. Even within the structure of the imperialist State he tried to lay the foundation of a new social system based upon education and organisation of the people. The cardinal feature of his politics, therefore, was not the struggle for the state power but to educate and organise the people to make them fit for feedom and democracy. He was primarily motivated by the desire to remove the weaknesses of the Indian people and not by any racial hatred against the alien government.

Rabindranath Tagore joined at first the anti-partition movement which broke out in Bengal in 1905, but later on he left the movement for some fundamental differences. It is instructive to note those differences which would make the political outlook of the poet clear. The poet found that the main emphasis of the movement was negative in character. It was more concerned with boycotting schools and colleges and foreign cloth than with laying the foundation of an alternative educational and economic system. During these days a large number of national schools were organised in Bengal but the poet found that there was no clear philosophy behind those educational institutional institutions. The political leaders were busy with meetings, processions and demonstrations but not with the education and organisation of the people. In the movement the poet found only excitement, emotion and racial hatred which he compared with spark, and wrote that there was no attempt to enlighten the people but simply to inflame them. The poet did not underestimate the role of emotion or romanticism in the field of politics but wrote that unless the romantic spirit was reinforced by rational considerations it can never lead to success. A man under the influence of

intoxication, the poet wrote, can commit murder but cannot wage a succeful war. As a matter of fact, the outlook of the poet was radically different from that of the political leaders of the time. The political leaders tried to embarrass the government and all the excitement, turmoil and demonstration were directed towards that end. But the poet was not looking to the government but to the people. He tried to educate and organise them and so wanted a cool and dispassionate atmosphere.

The outlook of the poet was fundamentally different from that of Mahatmaji also. He could not agree with the Mahatma's technique to organise the people through the medium of the *charkha* nor could he approve of his alliance with the *khilafat* Movement and the slogan "Swaraj within one year". The poet tried to solve social and political problems directly and gradually through education, and so he considered the Mahatma's strategy of solving problems through some symbols of emotional significance as futile. So when the Mahatma declared foreign cloth as impure and encouraged their burning. Rabindranath opposed it. Mahatmaji considered the existence of the foreign rule at the stumbling black to all progress of the country, and considered its early removal as the essential pre-condition for all development of the country. Rabindranath, on the outer hand, considered the ignorant, narrow and parochial outlook of the people as responsible for all the evils of the country including the foreign domination. To the poet the foreign domination was not the cause but the result of the country's weaknesses. Rabindranath with the vision of the prophet warned us that without a solution of our internal problems like the communal and provincial outlook it would be impossible for us to secure national independence and even if it was possible it would not pave the way for the progress of the country. Gandhiji, on the other hand, thought that the solution of the internal problems of the country was conditional upon the removal of the foreign power. The difference between their outlook to thus obvious.

Rabindranath was an artist in the field of politics. He was thoroughly constructive and he tired to construct a new society within the womb of the existing ugly one. His politics was not a politics of the struggle for power but one of educating and organising the people in which demonstrations, excitement and emotional outburst had no place. A passionate advocate of

individual freedom, Rabindranath was dead against all sorts of State authoritarianism. He was not a thorough-going anarchist but he tried to limit the power of the State to the minimum possible extent. His individualism did not however lead to *laissez faire* individualism and cut-throat competition. He considered all human progress as due to co-operation among individuals and he stood for a co-operative economy free from exploitation and regimentation. The politics of the poet was ethical in character and, like Gandhiji, he also believed that a moral end can never be realised by immoral means. He was against all so-called short-cuts. He traced the root of all social evils to the minds of men and considered the renewal of man as the only stable foundation of the reconstruction of society. A pioneer in humanist politics, Rabindranath showed us that revolution was after all a work of art.

19

TAGORE'S CRISIS CLARITY

NORMAN COUSINS

When I rose to speak on Tagore before the All-India Bengali Literary Conference, during my recent visit to India, I saw before me in the auditorium representatives from many of the world's commonwealths, men and women who had in some cases been drawn to India from halfway across the earth—drawn by the gravitational pull still exercised by the personality of Rabindranath Tagore ! What is the nature of Tagore's spell ? Why is it that, decades after his physical death, Tagore continues to excite and inform the imaginations not only of his own countrymen but of men from nations and cultures lying at a considerable distance from the Indian subcontinent ?

The answer is not obscure : Whoever you are, whatever you are interested in, Tagore has something important to say to you. For Tagore was one of the truly universal men who have walked this earth. A giant of the Bengali renaissance, he would also be regarded in the West as a Renaissance man, for he combined in one person the abundant gifts of poet, dramatist, painter, philosopher, composer, educator.

Which of these gifts has exercised the greatest appeal ?

In this decade, I would guess that Tagore's social philosophy, if not in greatest demand, at least speaks to the greatest need. For we live in an age moving at jet speed, seemingly to its own demolition.

If it is true that difficult situations call for heroic actions, it is also true that heroic thoughts must precede action. Tagore's

philosophy, his attitude, his style, belong to such an heroic world. For no matter how black and bitter the situation. Tagore possessed the gift of seeing things calmly and at their centre : he had that gift of the intellect and the emotions which the American philosopher, William James once called "crisis clarity."

I would submit that such clarity is in short supply during our present crisis. Indeed, one of the most insidious aspects of that crisis is that, caught within its gravitational field, we have the dangerous illusion that we are thinking with perfect clarity. It is only when we measure our thinking against that of a universal mind such as Tagor's that we realized with a start of horrow how warped and subjective our conclusions may be.

Let me be more concrete. Throughout Tagore's lifetime the British committed outrages in India—outrages which ranged from overt oppression to more subtle forms of exquisite social and psychological torture. Tagore's reaction to these continuing outrages and provocations was most revealing, most meaningful, in ways that far transcend the specific British-Indian confrontation; it is the quality of his reaction, it seems to me, that makes Tagore basic reading for today. I will touch on reaction in just a moment, but the point I want to make first is that Tagore has survived his era intact. True, his social context has crumbled to dust, but his principles of social thought and action were so true to the mark, so universal, that I find them indispensable for developing sound attitudes toward the universal crisis of today.

Of course, every era has its crisis; unfortunately, our era has produced a richer and more variegated crop crises than perhaps any other in history. So before I make a perhaps presumptuous attempt to apply Tagore's principles to the Crisis of our time, I had better outline briefly just which one of our several crises I am talking about.

I have reference to the overarching crisis brought into being by the nuclear bomb and by the existence of hostile, volatile national entities. I am talking of life in a world that can be scorched to a crisp in a matter of seconds, as if a blowtorch were to be applied to a bird's nest.

I hope the reader will not think it is my intention to harrow him, or to indulge in cold-war politicking, or to insult his intelligence by recounting facts already well known. But I do think it meaningful, indeed essential, for the reader of this article to

remember that his home, his town or city, and all the surrounding countryside, can in a twinkling be melted into nothingness if a man half a world away should decide that there is good reason to to push a single button.

If, as I sat here typing this article, a Roman centurion could be materialized across the desk from me, complete with his shield and short sword, he would seem a formidable apparition, a veritable death-dealing machine. Yet I, who by comparison look quite innocuous, represent in my person a minimum of 300,000 pounds of the explosive called TNT—that is may share of the explosive power now stored within the nuclear arsenals of my country. And I am only one citizen out of 180 million! Furthermore, it is likely that among the subscribers to the *Radical Humanist* there are citizens of the other so-called nuclear-club nations who in their persons probably represent a quotient of explosive power fully equal to my own. Incidentally, those subscribers who are not citizens of the nuclear-club powers need not feel excluded from this grisly sharing-out process : An official estimate states the amount of destructive nuclear power stockpiled *in the American arsenal alone* is more than enough to account for 20,000 pounds of TNT for every human being now alive! This average omount increases steeply when we add the awesome stockpiles maintained by the other "nuclear dowers."

Meanwhile, even as I write, the physicists of these nuclar-club nations are busy developing bombs which will raise our destructive quotients even higher. Already the standard large bomb-in-being is of the 20-megaton variety . . . it contains 1,000 times the destructive power of the bomb that incinerated Hiroshima. This 20-megaton bomb contains more destructive power than a caravan of one million trucks, each carrying 20,000 pounds of TNT. I will spare both the reader and myself any detailed listing of the horrors attendant on the use of even one such bomb : the melting down of people, animals and things; and the lingering poisonous effects, both on the immediate area, and on those distant areas in which radio-active fall-out comes to earth.

In the meantime, pending any actual dropping of the bomb, most countries of the world—depending on the degree of their involvement in the nuclear confrontation—have sunk into a state of paranoid isolation from each other. Despite the promise held

forth by the various ad hoc alliances and economic unions between the nations, I sense a great wariness, a rather frightening holding of the breath. They view each other with varying degrees of fear and hatred, and the way out of this "deep freeze" is not easily found.

If it is to be found at all, it will be found. I submit, by men and women who are conversant with the living past as well as with the inescapable present, men and women who have profited by their reading of the great minds, among whom I rank Tagore high. I rank him especially high because he served not just India, but bequeathed to us all ideas which should prove most helpful in the search for a new form for the human community. Indeed, it is my conviction that Tagore can give us an affirmative answer to the question of whether the human community shall be a battle-field or a neighbourhood.

I came to Tagore first in 1937 through reading a book by Romain Rolland. Among other things, the book contrasted the ideas of Gandhi with those of Tagore, dramatizing the importance of this dualism in awakening India. In some respects this dualism remained me of the Hamilton-Jefferson controversy in my own country's history, with important elements of the philosophy of each man coming together to create a vital blend. Gandhi approached mankind through India; Tagore approached India through mankind.

In reading Rolland, it became clear to me that Gandhi's teachings and his non-co-operation movement were enriched and invigorated as the result of Tagore's ceaseless prodding in behalf of universalism.

Tagore recognized the danger to the world of yet another purely nationalist movement. He feared that the Gandhi movement might get beyond Gandhi, that the heat generated by non-co-operation could become the fever of a national authori-anism.

India's problem, as Tagore saw it, was inseparable from the world problem. "No nation can find its own salvation by breaking away from the others. The awakening of India is bound up in the awakening of the world." I can recall now the thrill I felt in reading Tagore's poetic definition of universalism :

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by
narrow domestic falls;
Where words come out of the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms toward perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the
dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening
thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country
awake."

What was happening in India made me feel foolish for having been mired so long in the futility that was the fashion of my generation. Compared to India's, our problems were as wisps of smoke alongside a thunderhead. And yet, India was moving toward freedom precisely because a philosophy compounded of affirmation, action, compassion, and universalism was giving inspiration and direction to countless millions who were learning to think about the idea of freedom for the first time.

It was natural that the momentum generated by Gandhi and Tagore should carry me back to an appraisal of the American philosophers. It was even more natural, perhaps, that I should begin with Emerson, with whom the Indian thinkers seemed to have such a rich affinity. What farmerly had seemed to me in Emerson to be a collection of bland philosophical truisms—somewhat in the lavender tradition—now came alive with force and distinction.

As in Gandhi and Tagore, there was the vigorous assertion of individual integrity and purpose as a foundation for services to the general welfare, There was the Gandhian disdain in Emerson for conformacy and convention : "Every true man is a cause, a country, and an age; requires infinite spaces and numbers and time fully to accomplish his design; and posterity seems to follow his steps as a traid of clients." Then, in a one-line distillation of the Gandhi and Tagore philosophy, Emerson wrote, "Nothing can give you peace but the triumph of principles." Dozens of others had said it before Emerson; he brought in into rich focus.

Thus, Tagore was that most valuable of thinkers, the one who is not only a reward and a delight in himself, but who also

brings—the eager mind into phase with other great thinkers. The impetus I had gained in from Tagore now led me to re-read, and re-esteem other great American universalist thinkers—Jefferson, Franklin, James, Holmes, and Wilson—who saw their country as a universal, not a national phenomenon.

I spoke a moment ago of Tagore's style—of his attitude in the face of provocation and outrage. The quality of that attitude is not easy to define. Certainly Tagore was not a mystic in the sense of being a man who rises above the struggle by averting his eyes and pretending it does not exist. On the contrary, Tagore was intensely *engage*, deeply aware of the iniquities and bitter deprivations which plagued his times. "It must be admitted on all-hands," he once wrote, "that the world today belongs to the Europeans. It is their milch cow, and it fills their pail to the overflowing. We in the East do nothing but gaze and gaps in astonishment while our share of the world's food and wealth rapidly vanishes."

And in a blazing passage, he says, "Beyond the bonds of Europe the torch of its civilization was not meant to give light but to start fires. So it happened that pellets of opium supported by common balls were directed at the heart of China, an atrocity the like of which history had not known before, except perhaps in the newly discovered America where European powers in their greed for gold used deceit and violence to destroy the wonderful Maya people . . . And everyone is aware of the horrors of European rule in the African province of Congo :

> "Then came the Great War, and a curtain went up, all at once, on the stage of Western history. It was as though a drunken maniac was revealed in all his starkness . . . . This modern eruption was something volcanic, the suppressed criminality freed of the lid of pressure belching forth lava-like, reddening the sky with its glare and consuming the green richness of the earth . . . . Western civilization no longer admits any call to a sense of horror . . . The very Europe which had once reviled Turkey now openly flaunts fascism . . ."

Yet Tagore never indulged himself in the obvious temptation to write Europe off, to condemn it as soulless, materialstic, and

barbarous. He urged his countrymen always to look beneath appearances, to condemn what was bad in Europe, but to recognize the good. He warned, "To say that Europe does not express the human spirit, merely accumulates material things, is as good as saying that a tree does not express its life through the dead leaves which it sheds. It is the force of life in the tree that makes it shed its leaves, the dead leaves are no sign of its own death ceases." He speaks of the remarkable Europeans who have found their way to India and dedicated their lives to the country. "These examples," says Tagore, "are of people whose self-effacement took place under conditions far apart from the familiar ways of their experience . . . . They even had to carve out their own path of sacrifice, since all know paths were forbidden to them . . . . Can anyone derive such amazing strength from a tradition of materialism . . . . ? A cynic alone may say that Europe rules all the world today by its material power. The true source of its strength is undoubtedly spiritual. In no other way can that strength be accounted for."

Time and again, Tagore urged his countrymen to assimilate the best ideals of Europe, not to confuse rejection of its aggressions with rejection of its good points. I would remind you that this was no easy piece of advice. As an Indian who wished to rally his countrymen to the struggle for independence, Tagore might easily have gained recruits by picturing Europeans—and more especially the British—as being, all of them, the brutes and blackguards that large numbers of them certainly were. He said, "Professor or magistrate, or merchant or police chief—take any of these Englishmen in India—and you will see that not one is capable of representing English culture at its best. . . .

"No one is unaware of the scantiness of what is allotted to us for the preservation of our lives and our dignity as human beings. There is great lack of food, education and medical aid; drinking water is to be obtained only after clearing the slime; but there is no lack of policemen. There are also highly paid officials whose salaries, like the Gulf Stream, flow out in order to keep the British Isles warm. We provide their pensions from our own funeral expenses. All this is due to the fact that greed is blind, greed is ruthless, and India is the victim of the greed of her masters."

One might think the logical sequel of these words would be a call for a blind anti-British vendetta, but Tagor was too wise and

generous for this : "Even in this painful situation," he writes, "I shall never deny that there is generosity in the English nature, that when it comes to ruling foreign countries other European nations have been even more niggardly and cruel." And in another place he says, "In the days gone by we in India came to know, through English literature and English history, the Englishman who hates slavery and is a friend of all mankind; who is an ardent believer in justice and a champion of freedom for subject nations. These noble qualities are now to be found cruelly contradicted in a thousand ways all over the Indian political scene. But it will be wrong to think that the contradictions reveal the real English character : they are only the unhappy symptoms of the fact that for some reason the negative side of the English character has been predominant in India."

We see here Tagore's chief characteristic : he says, know the enemy, resist the enemy, but in so doing see through to his natural goodness, with an eye toward reconciliation after the conflict ends. For Tagore, British rule in India was a phase : he saw the task of India as surviving that phase and moving into nationhood with a minimum of lasting hatreds. The present good relations between Britain and India attest the wisdom of this approach. If Tagore appalled by the excesses of European mastery over Asia, could nonetheless see through his resentments ahead to the day when the dethroned Europeans would be India's friends in the international community, is it not possible for us—standing as we do on Tagore's shoulders—to discern through the fogs of international suspicion those elements on the world scene which give promise of a peaceful future ? Such discernment is, of course, not easily arrived at, for as Tagore put it, "The ability to penetrate the guise of the unfamiliar and discover any good behind it is rare."

One of the "positive elements" that Tagore discerned operating behind the facade of British and European hegemony was the power of science. I might say, incidentally, that I am always amused when I talk to people whose ideas about. Tagore are derived mainly from a few Sunday-supplement stories about him and from pictures showing a tall prophet with glowing eyes and a flowing beard. Such people tend to think of Tagore rather patronizingly, labelling him as a screne Eastern mystic who was ignorant of such ugly facts of life as social upheavals and technological advance.

Of course this was not at all the case. Tagore was as modern as tomorrow. His universalism embraced the spiritual and the material aspects of life in an integral way.

"In its external aspect," he wrote, "the universe is a huge machine which does not deviate at all from its laws. This material universe obstructs us in various ways and the people who have been so idle or foolish as to try to avoid it have ended up with deceiving themselves instead of getting round the obstructions. On the other hand, the people who have mastered the laws of matter have not only overcome the impediments of matter, but have also been helped by it. Possessing the secrets of the material world they penetrated into its furthest part before other people, and helped themselves to its riches, while the laggards and late-comers have found that there was little or nothing left for them to get.

> "In these circumstances, it will not help us in the East to condemn the learning which has enabled the West to conquer the world. Learning is truth, any by condemning it we shall only be condeming ourselves."

But Tagore goes on to say. "When with the key of science Europe opened the mystery chamber of the universe, it found fixed laws in whichever direction it looked. Constant association with them would seem to have made European lose sight of something which is beyond these laws and has a deep affiliation with our humanity. . . .Preoccupation with spirituality has made the East enfeebled and supine, but can it be said that the one-sided materialism of the West is helping it to reach the desired goal of self-fulfilment by hopping on one leg ?"

He later concludes, ". . .both the West and the East will be frustrated if they remain disunited. . .the unity of East and West will achieve the unity of spiritual and scientific knowledge." Plainly, Tagore felt that the unity of spiritual and scientific knowledge took place in man, whose well-being became the criterion of good and bad.

Although I wince to say it, Tagore felt that America, a country to which he was otherwise attracted, was hopping too much on one leg"—the materialistic leg. "While travelling abroad," he says, "I saw that the West was having a good time, but was not happy. I lived seven months without a break in that

land of titanic wealth, America. Sitting every day at my hotel window with a 35-story skyscraper frowning on me, I used to think of the great difference there is between our goddess of prosperity, Lakshmi, and our god of wealth, Kuvera. Lakshmi grants well-being, which gives grace to wealth. Kuvera grants acquisition, which helps wealth to multiply, although the multiplying has no final object. . . Once caught in this craze, a man goes on acquiring more and more, until his blood is fired with excitement, and he passes out drunk with success. . . . In the stone-and-brick jungles on the other side of the Atlantic my sickened heart used to say, they certainly make a big noise over here, but where is the music ? 'I want more, I want more'—these words cannot make up a tune."

These reflections of Tagore upon my country were of course made some decades ago, but I find them penetrating and suggestive; whether any of the elements of his analysis still apply to America or to any other country is something I leave to the reader !

I have been quoting Tagore at such length for several reasons : one is that I always enjoy following the play of ideas produced by this exciting and universal mind. Another, more pressing reason has been my wish to set the stage for an admittedly risky experiment, namely, an attempt to apply Tagore's outlook, his "crisis clarity" to the crisis of our time. There is of course the danger that I will force Tagore's writings into the Procrustean bed of my own preconceptions, and make him seem to say the opposite of what he intended. But I trust the reader will not decide that I have made such an error.

Let me begin this experiment in extrapolation by saying again that the nuclear bomb and the fact of competing national entities add up to an unprecedented crisis in human affairs. Of course Tagore did not live to see the bomb, but he saw clearly the way science was taking us. He wrote : "Today science has opened up so many travel routes that geographical barriers have ceased to exist. So many men, and what is more, so many nations are getting together, that the problem of human unity is now more important than ever before. What will unite those whom science is bringing together ?. . . . The outer forces that can unite lag far behind. . . . It is all too obvious that nations are coming together without uniting—and the agony of it afflicts the world today."

This strikes me as a most valuable insight! Decades ago Tagore noted a tendency which has today become the actuality—that is, the countries of the world agglomerating together, clustering in unions that are more mechanical than chemical, then pulling apart easily in order to form threatening new, parochial regroupings which constitute a kind of regional nationalism. As Tagore said, "How to be free from arrogant nationalism is today the chief lesson to be learnt. Tomorrow's history will begin with a chapter on internationalism, and we shall make ourselves unfit for tomorrow if we retain any manners, customs, or habits of thought that are unfavourable to internationalism. . . European thinkers are frightened that nationalism should still be so strong. . .but it is a fact nevertheless that the peoples of the world have come together. Since no nation, however, strong, can crush that fact. . . all must come to terms with it; or else there will be no end to these wars of annihilation under the spur of the national passion with its hypocritical diplomacy."

Since Tagore wrote these words, the coming together of nations has been speeded by the advent of the United Nations and perhaps, willy-nilly, by the very threat posed by the nuclear bomb. Perhaps, as he said, the individual Western nations find it difficult to unite because they are not united from within. He says, "Western civilization tries to keep itself free from danger by getting rid of all foreign elements, as we see even today in America, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. The reason is that in Western society there is often a grievous want of harmony between the different classes, and those who should be integral parts of the social fabric are often regarded as undesirable burdens. In a society where one's own people are held suspect as potential trouble makers, there can be no place of refuge for foreigners. . . .There are only two ways open to a country so far as treatment of outsiders is concerned. It can either kill them or turn them out, freeing itself from potential danger, or it can fit them into its own structure and gives them a place in its economy . . . .It needs genius to make friends out of adversaries. It is the way of genius to reach deep into minds, to hold minds in the spell of love. . . ."

How are we to create such a spell of love? Not unexpectedly Tagore the education recommends elaborate, intensive educational exchanges on a scale not yet seen in the world. Already such

student exchanges are well underway. In addition, the interchange between scientists, engineers, and other professional men is at an all-time high. Then too, the United Nations has succeeded the relatively impotent League of Nations. But perhaps most important is Tagore's general exhortation that the government and the individual citizens of the various countries think through the question of intranational and international unity. As one who has tried conscientiously to do so, I can only tell you may own conclusions, conclusions which I think were clearly adumbrated in Tagore's writings. I think that what is needed is a Constitutional or Organizational Convention—whatever the name—which will attract the best minds the world can offer, to examine the weaknesses of the existing world structure and to do something about laying a foundation and reinforcing the main beams in order that the structure will not fall of its own weight as now threatens. It is a far bigger problem than the one that faced the Constitution makers of America more than one hundred and fifty years ago, but the stakes and the potential benefits are correspondingly large.

Paradoxically, the biggest obstacle to the sort of world unity sought by Tagore is not the actual formation of a suitable organization—for the United Nations is already an organization-in-being—but the formation of a state of mind among peoples everywhere which will at least permit the attempt at unity to be made. In my country as in others there is a reluctance to admit the fundamental, even trite, concept that time does not stand still and that the passing of time has brought changes which, whether the idea appeals to us or not, impose on us the necessity of making the best of them rather than the worst. If the world has become an association—even a disunited, dispersed association—it will do us no good to claim we do not belong to it, unless, of course, we are prepared to say that we do not belong to the world either.

It seems to me that my own country has a vested interest in the holding of such a world convention. For America has been a prime laboratory for the new world order; a convention of the best minds to be found on the earth can borrow from the history and experiences of America just as the Founding Fathers of America borrowed from the laboratory of the Greek world. And if it was true that America one hundred years ago could not exist

20

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

KSHITISH ROY

Born on 7 May 1861, in the Jorasanko house at 6 Dwarkanath Tagore Lane, Calcutta, Rabindranath was the fourteenth child of Devendranath Tagore (1817-1905) and Sarada Devi 1826/27-1875).

The Tagore belonged to the Pirali class of the Brahmins—the more orthodox amongst whom frowned upon inter-dining and inter-marrying with them on account of their supposed intimacies with Mussalmans in bygone days Originally hailing from Jessore, the family settled in Calcutta round about the time the East India Company had founded the city. Through co-operating with the Company when the assumed ruling powers, the Tagores prospered and were recognized among the leading families of Calcutta's new aristocracy by 1814, when Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833) initiated his activities to fight Hindu orthodoxy on the one hand and to bring about a synthesis of the culture of India with the liberal traditions of the West. Rabindranath's grandfather, Dwarkanath (1794-1846), known by the honorific title of 'Prince' because of his great wealth and munificence, became one of the stanuchest supporters of the Raja in all his public activities. Likewise, Rabindranath's father, known as 'Maharshi' for his piety and faith, became a redoubtable champion of Brahmoism which may well be regarded as Rammohun's vindication of the monotheistic tradition of the Upanishads. The peculiar combination of tradition and progress, which characterized Rabindranath's attitude of life, may best be explained by his

immediate family background.

Notable among Rabindranath's brothers and sisters were the poet-philosopher Dwijendranath Tagore (1840-1926), Satyendranath Tagore (1842-1923), the first Indian to join the Indian Civil Service, Jyotirindranath (1849-1925), the well-known playwright and translator, and Swarnakumari Devi (1855-1932), the foremost women-novelist of her day.

Rabindranath's early childhood was spent under the tutelage of family servants. He had to fall back upon his own resources to feed his lively imagination. Restrictions whetted his appetite for the far-away. His other source of joy was whom some of the maids and servants initiated him in the love of tales and fables, rhymes and songs. The twin muses of song and poetry came to him hand to hand fairly early in life. He started scribbling verses soon after he learnt his alphabet and he imbibed music from the atmosphere at home.

Rabindranath's school career was brief (1868-74), uneventful and haphazard—he had to change school four times at least. He did not react favourably to set lessons. The generally unruly conduct of his class-mates and the discipline of the rod disguested him. In 1874, when his name did not appear in the list of candidates promoted to the next higher class of St. Xavier's School, he was withdrawn from school. But this only whetted his appetite for self-education through his mother tongue in which he received encouraging support initially from his third brother, Hemendranath (1844-84), and later from Dwijendranath and Jyotirindranath.

Rabindranath was going on for twelve when (1873) he was invested with the sacred thread and initiated with the *Gayatri*. Thereafter he accompanied his father on an extended tour which took him as far as Dalhousie—*via* Bolpur and Amritsar. It was at Bolpur that he first really came into close contact with Devendranath—his saintly father—who exerted a lasting influence on his personality and character.

The family discovered Rabindranath's gift for song and poetry quite early in his life. His first poem to appear in print was 'Abhilash' in the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* in 1874 where it was described to be a twelve-year-old boy's composition. The next year, when he was barely fourteen, he made his first public appearance as a poet reciting a patriotic poem of his own composition at the ninth session of the Hindu Mela—a cultural fair

devoted to patriotism and social welfare organized by Nabagopal Mitra, Rajnarain Bose and others under the patronage and sponsorship of the Tagore family.

With the death of his mother in 1875, Rabindranath passed into the guardianship of Jyotirindranath and his wife Kadambari Devi (1858-84)—both of whom, more than any others helped his adolescent aspirations come into full flowering. This was the time when he was enrolled at the juniormost member of a short-lived secre society modelled after Mazzini's Carbonari and named Sanjivani Sabha, of which Rajnarain Bose was the President.

His first literary writings (verse, narrative poetry, criticism, fiction, essays, translation, etc.), appeared first in *Jnanankur O Prativimba* (from 1876 onwards) and later in the family literary journal *Bharati* (from 1877 onwards). In 1877, he appeared for the first time on the family stage in the title role of a farce written by Jyotirindranath, as adapted from Moliere's 'Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme.' The next year (1878) he accompanied his brother Satyendranath to England where he studied English literature for some time under Henry Morley at the University College, London. His 'Letters from a Sojourner in Europe'—being his outspoken, if somewhat indiscreet, comments on the life and times of London—alarmed some of his conservative elders and necessitated his recall from London early in 1880. The 'Letters' were published in book-form the next year (1881), however, it being not only his first book in prose but also the first in the spoken form of prose. The year 1881 also saw him writing his first musical play, 'Valmiki Pratibha', and appearing himself in the title role, delivering his first written lecture on Music and Feeling before the Bethune Society, and foiling one more of the family's plans to send him abroad—this time to qualify for the Bar. Returning from Madras *en route* to London, he too up residence with Jyotirindranath at Sunder Street where he experienced his poet's vision, which he immortalized in a poem entitled 'The Awakening of the Waterfall'—presaging the upsurage of a fine frenzy of creative writing. After spending some time with Satyendranath's family in Karwar, he returned to Calcutta late in 1883 to be married to Mrinalini (b. 1873). The next year (1884) saw the tragic death by suicide of Kadambari Devi—an event that left a lasting scar on his mind. The same year he was appointed Secretary of the Adi Brahmo Samaj and crossed swords with Bankim Chandra

Chatterjee, the leading literary figure of Bengal of the day, on the ideals of Hinduism. In 1885, he became associated with another family magazine, the *Balak*, and assisted its Editor, Jnanadanandini Devi (Satyendranath's wife) in its management. Some of his earliest juvenile writings appeared in the *Balak*. That was also the year when the first collection of his songs came out with the title 'Rabichchaya'—indicative of his popularity as a lyricist-composer.

His eldest child (a daughter), Bela or Madhurilata, was born in 1886. The same year he composed and himself sang the inaugural song at the second session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta.

Literary biographers agree that Rabindranath's many-sided genius entered a new phase with the composing of the poems of 'Manasi', the musical play 'Mayar Khela' and the drama 'Raja O Rani'—all of which were written during 1887-90. During this time he first participated publicly in political controversy when he protested against the reactionary anti-Indian policy of Lord Cross, the then Secretary of State for India, and advocated the appointment of elected representatives of the people a members of the Viceroy's Executive Council.

His eldest son, Rathindranath, was born in 1888. There was a brief interlude of about three months which he spent on a visit to England in the later part of 1890. The diary he maintained of the visit made scintillating reading when published in book-form.

Towards the end of 1890, on return from England, Rabindranath was entrusted by his father with the management of the extensive family estates in the Rajshahi district—with his headquarters at Shilaidah. His third child, Renuka, was born early in 1891.

Rabindranath spent the next decade of his life (1890-1900) mainly in the countryside, in close contact with the children of the soil. In the first phase, his confrontation with the rural situation took the form of exquisitely sensitive vignettes of the around—'The Postmaster' was one of the crop of these short stories which were published, week by week, in the *Hitavadi*. Thereafter, when the monthly *Sadhana* was founded by him in 1891, with his nephew, Sudhindranath, as editor, it became almost the sole organ of his self-expression. The *Sadhana* published some of his best writings—including 'Sonar Tari' and Panchabhuter

Diary'. In 1894 he assumed the editorship of the periodical itself and remained its editor until it ceased publication in 1895. His exquisite letters addressed to his niece, Indiradevi, later collected as 'Chhinnapatra', belonged to this period.

His youngest daughter, Mira, was born in 1893 and Samindra, his youngest son, the year after.

The *Sadhana* phase was also a phase of constructive nationalism for Rabindranath. His patriotism now became not only an abstract love of the country but a truly felt love of the people—the village folk—who constituted the country. In 1893, at a public meeting presided over by Bankimchandra Chatterji, he read out a well-argued political essay on "Ingraj O Bharatbasi". From then on, he began to point out that while in the West the State formed the nucleus of the body-politic, traditionally, in India, the rural community or society constituted such a base. He, therefore, advocated widespread use of the mother-tongue as a medium of education and described self-help and self-respect as the back-bone of Swadeshism. On the other hand, he invoked India's history and legends in the poems of 'Katha O Kahini' to inculcate patriotic and national sentiments. A totally different genre of lightly tripping lyrics of the idyllic kind are to be found in 'Kshanika' written about the same time.

The end of the century saw Rabindranath preoccupied more and more with the fundamentals of the Indian problem and his growing conviction that these were tied up with the prevailing faulty system of education. Instead of sending his own children to the existing schools he started his own home-school for them at Shilaidah. That was when he conjured up his vision of a Tapovana school—where is might became possible to link up learning and living in an atmosphere of freedom, in the midst of nature, in a community where teachers would be *gurus* and pupils disciples in the traditional Upanishadic sense. He held up these ideals in the poems of 'Naivedya', and followed them up by founding a school in the Asrama built by his father at Santiniketan near Bolpur and bequeathed by him to a public trust. That was in 1901.

Eearlier in the same year, he took over the editorial charge of the *Bangadarshan*—a periodical founded by Bankimchandra—in its new series and contributed to it his novel 'Chokher Bali' ('Binodini' in English)—being the first psychological novel in any Indian language—in serial instalments.

A series of disasters—in the shape of family bereavement and chronic financial difficulties—followed close on the heels of the newly started school. His wife Mrinalini Devi died barely a year after (1902) and Renuka the next year. Satischandra Roy, a young man of unusual talents and one of Rabindranath's devoted followers who dedicated themselves to the work of the school, died of smallpox at Santiniketan in 1904. And then early in 1905, passed away his revered father, the Maharshi who was like a *guru* to him. Notwithstanding these tragedies, and the tremendous sacrifices involved in supporting his educational venture practically single-handed, Rabindranath persisted with his experiment. His literary work continued unabated and the first anthology of his poems was published at this time. Nor was he unresponsive to the country's call when the situation or circumstances demanded his attention. He had occasion to reprimand Lord Curzon when in his Convocation Address Curzon had castigated orientals as a class given to exaggeration. When the same Viceroy proposed vivisection of Bengal for administrative exigencies following the imperialist dictum of 'divide and rule', Rabindranath came out of his seclusion at Santiniketan to lend his powerful voice on behalf of the nation against this act of high-handedness. He preached Swadeshi, composed heart-stirring Swadeshi songs, wrote trenchant essays, addressed meetings and even headed protest demonstrations. But with it all, he advocated his own plan of constructive nationalism, with the village as the base of all nation-building activities. In 1906, he sent his eldest son Rathindranath to the U.S.A to study Agriculture. The same year he drew up the constitution for a National Council of Education. But when the anti-partition movement took an agitational turn, he withdrew himself to his work at Santiniketan. He was elected President of the first session of the Bangiya Sahitya Sammilani (Bengali Literary Conference) in 1907. His youngest son Samindranath died of cholera the same year. That was also the year of the ripening of his acquaintance with Ramananda Chatterji, the well-known journalist who started publishing his novel 'Gora' serially in his monthly *Prabasi.* Rabindranath presided over the Bengal Provincial Conference in Pabna and delivered his address in Bengali. In 1909, he wrote the play 'Prayaschitta' and through the character of Dhananjoy

Vairagi upheld the principles of what came to be known later as Satyagraha. On his return from the U.S.A. in 1910 Rathindranath was married to Pratima Devi—that being the first case of widow-marriage in the family. In 1911, Rabindranath's fiftieth birth anniversary was celebrated by the inmates of Santiniketan—with Ajit Kumar Chakravarti reading out a long article regarded as the first serious attempt made at appraising his poetry. He reminiscences were serialized in the *Prabasi* and the original Bengali poems of 'Gitanjali' and the play, 'Dakghar' (Post Office), were published the same year.

1912 was an eventful year. Early that year he was given the first important public reception of his career when the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad felicitated him in Calcutta on the completion of his fiftieth year. Two months after, he read at Overtoun Hall his famous essay, 'My Interpretation of India's History', wherein he gave a prose paraphrase as it were of his 'Jana Gana Mana' song (now the National Song of India), earlier composed for the anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj, proclaiming that India stood for unity in the midst of diversity. Ill health necessitated a change of climate at Shilaidah where he whiled away idle hours translating some of his recent poems (mainly from 'Gitanjali') into English. Later in May, he sailed for Englad where his Ms. translation of the 'Gitanjali' poems created a sensation in English literary circles headed by W.B. Yeats. While in England he came into contact with some of the leading intellectuals of the day including Masefield. Mez Sinclair, Evelyn Underhill, Fox-Strangways, Ezra Pound, Nevinson, Wells, Bertrand Russell and others. It was here that he first met C.F. Andrews destined to be his lifelong friend and follower. Here, he also completed negotations for the purchase of Surul Kuthi which later became the headquarters of his rural reconstruction work founded in 1922. From London he proceeded to the U.S.A. and, while there, came to learn that a limted edition of the English 'Gitanjali' brought out by the Indian Society had been warmly received by the elite of England. During October 1912 to April 1913, while in the States, he lectured at Urbana, Illinois, Chicago Rochester and Harvard. On return to England he wass successfully operated upon for his chronic ailment. Soon after his return home to India the news was rcceived of the Swedish Academy selecting 'Gitanjali' for the Nobel Award in Literature for 1913.

The tour of the West and the world fame that followed, served only to strengthen his ideas about India assuming her historic role as a unifier and synthesiser of the contributions of the East and the West towards enrichment of the humanities. While the arrival of C.F. Andrews to devote himself to the task of Santiniketan raised hopes of the Asrama providing a nucleus for such inter-cultural fellowship, the outbreak of War in the West posed a challenge. Rabindranath tried to meet it by undertaking a tour of Japan and the U.S.A.—as yet not embroiled in the conflict—and by appealing to them to rise above the greed and selfishness of a narrow nationalism, in the larger interest of world peace. That was during 1916-17.

Prior to this, Rabindranath associated himself with a new literary movement started in Bengal by Pramatha Chaudhuri and contributed to its mouthpiece *Sabuj Patra* some of his writings, noted for the originality of their style. These included scintillating essays, lyrics of great sensitivity ('Balaka' poems in particular), and the two novels, 'Chaturanga' (Four Chapters) and 'Ghare Baire' (The Home and The World). In 1915, he was Knighted by the King-Emperor. The same year, with Andrews as their common link, Tagore and Gandhiji met for the first time at Santiniketan.

On return from his foreign tour, Rabindranath agitated against the internment of Annie Besant, and canvassed support, on her release, for her election as the President of the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress. He read his poem, "Indian's Prayer," at the plenary session. On the cultural front, he took an active part in organizing Vichitra and accommodated the institution in his part of the Tagore house at Jorasanko.

1918 saw the death of his eldest child, Madhurilata. The same year the foundation was laid at Santiniketan of the Institution which came to be known as the Visva-Bharati, World University. During the next two years, 1919-20, Rabindranath travelled all over India inviting support for the Visva-Bharati. In 1919, he relinquished his Knighthood as a protest against the British atrocities at Jallianwalla Bagh in the Punjab. 1920-21 saw him in the West, visiting England, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, the Scandinavian countries and the U.S.A., campaigning support of the intellectuals for the Visva-Bharati. On his return to Santiniketan, he made

over the institution of Visva-Bharati to a public trust at a formal meeting presided over by Dr. Brojendra Nath Seal, in the distinguished presence of Dr. Sylvain Levi who joined the Institution as its first Visiting Professor. Over the next decade (1921-30), Rabindranath's main preoccupation was to establish the Visva-Bharati on a sound foundation and for this purpose he undertook a number of tours at home and abroad. Among the foreign countries covered were : China and Japan (1924), South America (1925), Italy, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, France, the Balkan countries and Egypt (1926), South-east Asian countries (1927) and Canada (1929). In 1930) he delivered the Hibbert Lectures at Oxford—his subject being "Religion of Man". He took the occasion to exhibit his paintings (a new hobby acquired round about 1925-26) in all the countries he visited this time—including France, England, Germany, Soviet Russia and the U.S.A.

In 1931, his seventieth birthday anniversary was celebrated at a Jayanti function in Calcutta. Leading intellectuals of India and abroad joined in paying him homage. And the tributes were collected in a volume entitled 'Golden Book of Tagore'. In 1932, he toured Persia and Iraq on an invitation from Reza Shah Pahlavi, King of Iran. The same year he was appointed Ramtanu Lahiri Professor of Bengali at the University of Calcutta. In 1933, he presided over the centennial of Raja Rammohun Roy. From about this time his poetry took a new turn and the started experimenting with *vers libre* in 'Punascha'. 1936 saw him busy perfecting a new type of play combining music, miming and dance. These came to be known later as dance-drama. In 1937, he created history by delivering his Convocation Address at the University of Calutta in Bengali. The same year he was stricken with Erysipelas and his condition caused grave anxiety. Although he recovered, the condition of his health was not the same again. But his mind remained as alert as ever and he continued to take a lively interest in the affairs of his country and of the world in general. In 1938, when Czechoslovakia was overrun by Hitler's hordes, he sent a message to his friend, Lesny, in Prague condemning the betrayal of small nations by big powers. He also exchanged letters with the Japanese poet. Noguchi, decrying Japan's aggression in China. In 1939, at the request of

Subhas Chandra Bose, he laid the foundation of the Mahajati Sadan in Calcutta. The next year (1940) saw him deeply concerned with the turn taken by World War II. The same year Gandhiji visted him (for the last time) at Santiniketan, and in a parting message the Poet requested the Mahatma to accept the Visva-Bharati and give it his protection as it was like a vessel which carried the cargo of his life's best treasures. Andrews, who had brought the two together initially, died at a nursing home in Calcutta. On 7 August 1940, on behalf of Oxford University Sir Maurice Gwyer conferred its doctorate on Rabindranath at a special Convocation arranged at Santiniketan. Although his literary work continued till the end, by the beginning of 1941 his chronic kidney trouble started causing continuous trouble. His physical condition notwithstanding, he made a scathing reply to certain baseless accusations against India made by a British member of Parliament, Miss Rathbone. On 14 April, when his 80th birthday was celebrated at Santiniketan on the Bengali New Year's Day, he questioned the British intention towards India's struggle for independence in a trenchant address entitled "Crisis in Civilisation". He concluded his address by expressing the hope : "Perhaps the new down will come from this horizon, from the East where the Sun rises, and then, unvanquished Man will retrace his path of conquest, despite all barriers, to win back his lost heritage."

On 7 August 1941, he passed away in Calcutta after a surgical operation.

"In considering Tagore's life work," wrote Humayun Kabir in his Introduction to a centennial collection of Tagore's selected essays entitled 'Towards Universal Man', "one is again and again struck by the amazing versatility of his genius. He was essentially a poet but his interest were not confined to poetry. In sheer quantity of work few writers can equal him. His writings include more than a thousand poems and over two thousand songs in addition to a large number of short stories, novels, dramatic works and essays on the most diverse topics. In quality too he has reached heights which have been trodden and that too rarely by only the noblest among men . . . He was also a musician of the highest order. He took to painting when he was almost seventy and yet produced within ten years about three thousand

pictures—some of them of exceptional quality. In addition, he made notable contributions to religious and educational thought, to politics and social reform, to rural regeneration and economic reconstruction. His achievements in all these fields are so great that they mark him out as one of the greatest sons of India and indeed one who has a message for the entire mankind."

21

THE POET'S ANXIETY*

M.K. Gandhi

The Poet of Asia, as Lord Hardinge called Dr. Tagore, is fast becoming, if he has not already become, the Poet of the world. Increasing prestige has brought to him increasing responsibility. His greatest service to India must be his poetic interpretation of India's message to the world. The Poet is, therefore, sincerely anxious that India should deliver no false of feeble message in her name. He is naturally jealous of his country's reputation. He says he has striven hard to find himself in tune with the present movement. He confesses that he is baffled. He can find nothing for his lyre in the din and the bustle of Non-co-operation. In three forceful letters, he has endeavoured to give expression to his misgivings and he has come to the conclusion that Non-co-operation is not dignified enough for the India of his vision, that it is a doctrine of negation and despair. He fears that it is a doctrine of separation, exclusiveness, narrowness and negation.

No Indian can feel anything but pride in the Poet's exquisite jealously of India's honour. It is good that he should have sent to us his misgivings in language at once beautiful and clear.

In all humility, I shall endeavour to answer the Poet's doubts. I may fail to convince him or the reader who may have been touched by his eloquence, but I would like to assure him and India that Non-co-operation in conception is not any of the things

* *Young India*, June, 1, 1921,

he fears, and he need have no cause to be ashamed of his country for having adopted Non-co-operation. If, in actual application, it appears in the end to have failed, it will be no more the fault of the doctrine, than it would be of Truth, if those who claim to apply it in practice do not appear to succeed. Non-co-operation may have come in advance of its time. India and the world must then wait, but there is no choice for India save between violence and Non-co-operation.

Nor need the Poet fear that Non-co-operation is intended to erect a Chinese wall between India and the West. On the contrary, Non-co-operation is intended to pave the way to real, honourable and voluntary co-operation based on mutual respect and trust. The present struggle is being waged against compulsory co-operation, against one-sided combination, against the armed imposition of modern methods of exploitation masquerading under the name of civilization.

Non-co-operation is a protest against an unwitting and unwilling participation in evil.

The Poet's concern is largely about the students. He is of opinion that they should not have been called upon to give up Government schools before they had other schools to go to. Here I must differ from him. I have never been able to make a fetish of literary training. My experince has proved to my satisfaction that literary training by itself adds not an inch to one's moral height and that character-building is independent of literary training. I am firmly of opinion that the Government schools have unmanned us, rendered us helpless and Godless. They have filled us, with discontent, and, providing no remedy for the discontent, have made us despondent. They have made us what we were intended to become—clerks and interpreters. A government builds its prestige upon the apparently valuntry association of the governed. And if it was wrong to co-operate with the Government in keeping us slaves, we were bond to begin with those institutions in which our association appeared to be most voluntary. The youth of a nation are its hope. I hold that, as we discovered that the system of Government was wholly, or mainly evil, it became sinful for us to associate our children with it.

It is no argument against the soundness of the proposition laid down by me that the vast majority of the students went back after the first flush of enthusiasm. Their recantation is proof

rather of the extent of our degradation than of the wrongness of the step. Experince has shown that the establishment of national schools has not resulted in drawing many more students. The strongest and the truest of them came out without any national schools to fall back upon, and I am convinced that these first withdrawals are rendering service of the highest order.

But the Poet's protest against the calling out of the boys is really a corollary to his objection to the very doctrine of Non-co-operation. He has a horror of everything negative. His whole soul seems to rebel against the negative commandments of religion. I must give his objection in his own inimitable language. "R. in support of the present movement has often said to me that passion for rejection is a stronger power in the beginning than the acceptance of an ideal. Though I know it to be a fact, I cannot take it as a truth. *Brahmavidya* in India has for its object *mukti* (emancipation), while Buddhism has *nivana* (extinction). *Mukti* draws our attention to the positive and *nirvana* to the negative side of Truth. Therefore, he emphasized the fact of *duhkha* (misery) which has to be avoided and the *Brahmavidya* emphasized the fact of *ananda* (eternal bliss) which had to be attained." In these and kindred passages, the reader will find the key to the Poet's mentality. In my humble opinion, rejection is as much an ideal as the acceptance of a thing. It is as necessary to reject untruth as it is to accept truth. All religions teach that two opposite forces act upon us and that the human endeavour consists in a series of eternal rejections and acceptances. Non-co-operation with evil is as much a duty as co-operation with good. I venture to suggest that the Poet has done an unconscious injustice to Buddhism in describing *nirvana* as merely a negative state. I make bold to say that *mukti* is as much a negative state as *nirvana*. Emancipation from or extinction of the bondage of the flesh leads to *ananda*. Let me close this part of my argument by drawing attention to the fact that the final word of the Upanishads (*Brahmavidya*) is *Not*. *Neti* was the best description the authors of the Upanishads were able to find for Brahman.

I, therefore, think that the Poet has been unnecessarily alarmed at the negative aspect of Non-co-operation. We had lost the power of saying 'no'. It had become disloyal, almost sacrilegious to say 'no' to the Government. This deliberate refusal to co-operate is like the necessary weeding process that a cultivator has to resort to before he sows. Weeding is as necessary to agriculture

as sowing. Indeed, even whilst the crops are growing, the weeding fork, as every husbandman knows, is an instrument almost of daily use The nation's Non-co-operation is an invitation to the Government to co-operate with it on its own terms as is every nation's right and every good government's duty. Non-co-operation is the nation's notice that it is no longer satisfied to be in tutelage. The nation has taken to the harmless (for it), natural and religious doctrine of Non-co-operation in the place of the unnatural and irreligious doctrine of violence. And if India is ever to attain the the Swaraj of the Poet's dream, she will do so only by Non-violent Non-co-operation. Let him deliver his message of peace to the world, and feel confident that India, through her Non-co-operation, if she remains true to her pledge, will have exemplified his message. Non-co-operation is intended to give the very meaning to patriotism that the Poet is yearning after. An India prostrate at the feet of Europe can give no hope to humanity. An India awakened and free has a message of peace and good-will to a groaning world. Non-co-operation is designed to supply her with a platform from which she will preach the message.

22

THE GREAT SENTINEL*

M.K. Gandhi

The Bard of Santineketan has contributed to the *Modern Review* a brilliant essay on the present movement. It is a series of world pictures which he alone can paint. It is an eloquent protest against authority, slave mentality or whatever description one gives of blind acceptance of passing mania whether out of fear or hope. It is a welcome and wholesome reminder to all workers that we must not be important, we must not impose authority no matter how great. The Poet tells us summarily to reject anything and everything that does not appeal to our reason or heart. If we would gain Swaraj we must stand for Truth as we know it, at any cost. A reformer who is enraged because his message is not accepted must retire to the forest to learn how to watch, wait and pray. With all this one must heartily agree, and the Poet deserves the thanks of his countrymen for standing up for Truth and Reason. There is no doubt that our last state will be worse than our first, if we surrender our reason into somebody's keeping. And I would feel extremely sorry to discover that the country had unthinkingly and blindly followed all I had said or done. I am quite conscious of the fact that blind surrender to love is often more mischievous than a forced surrender to the lash of the tyrant. There is hope for the slave of the brute, none for that of love. Love is needed to strengthen the weak, love becomes tyrannical when it exacts obedience from an unbeliever. To mutter

Young India, 13 October 1921.

a *mantra* without knowing its value is unmanly. It is good, therefore, that the Poet has invited all who are slavishly *mimicking* the call of the Charkha boldly to declare their revolt. His essay serves as a warning to us all who in our impatience are betrayed into intolerance or even violence against those who differ from us. I regard the Poet as a sentinel warning us against the approach of enemies called Bigotry, Lethargy, Intolerance, Ignorance, Inertia and other members of that brood.

But whilst I agree with all that the Poet has said as to the necessity of watchfulness lest we cease to think, I must not be understood to endorse the proposition that there is any such blind obedience on a large scale in the country today. I have again and again appealed to reason, and let me assure him that if happily the country has come to believe in the spinning wheel as the giver of plenty, it has done so after labourious thinking, after great hesitation. I am not sure that even now educated India has assimilated the truth underlying the Charkha. He must not mistake the surface dirt for the substance underneath. Let him go deeper and see for himself, whether the Charkha has been accepted from blind faith or from reasoned necessity.

I do indeed ask the Poet and the Sage to spin the wheel as a sacrament. When there is war the poet lays down the lyre, the lawyer his law reports, the school-boy his books. The poet will sing the true note after the war is over, the lawyer will have occasion to go to his law books when people have time to fight among themselves. When a house is on fire, all the inmates go out, and each takes up a bucket to quench the fire. When all about me are dying for want of food, the only occupation permissible to me is to feed the hungry. It is my conviction that India is a house on fire because its manhood is being daily scorched; it is dying of hunger because it has no work to buy food with. Khulana is starving not because the people cannot work, but because they have no work. The Ceded Districts are passing successively through a fourth famine. Orissa is a land suffering from chronic famines. Our cities are *not* India. India lives in her seven and a half lakhs of villages, and the cities live upon the villages. They do not bring their wealth from other countries. The city people are brokers and commission agents for the big houses of Europe, America and Japan. The cities have co-operated with the latter in the bleeding process that has gone on for the past

two hundered years. It is my belief based on experience, that India is daily growing poorer. The circulation about her feet and legs has almost stopped. And if we do not take care, she will collapse altogether.

To a people famishing and idle, the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages. God created man to work for his food, and said that those who are without work were thieves. Eighty per cent of India are compulsory thieves half the year. Is it any wonder if India has become one vast prison ? Hunger is the argument that is driving India to the spinning wheel. The call of the spinning wheel is the noblest of all. Because it is the call of love. And love is Swaraj. The spinning wheel will curb the mind, when the time spent on necessary physical labour can be said to do so. We must think of millions who are today less than animals, who are almost in a dying state. The spinning wheel is the reviving draught for the millions of our countrymen and countrywomen. 'Why should I who have no need to work for food spin ?' May be the question asked. Because I am eating what does not belong to me. I am living on the spoliation of my countrymen. Trace the course of every pice that finds its way into your pocket, and you will realize the truth of what I write. Swaraj has no meaning for the millions if they do not know how to employ their enforced idleness. The attainment of this Swaraj is possible within a short time and it is so possible only by the revival of the spinning wheel.

I do want growth, I do want self-determination, I do want freedom, but I want all these for the soul. I doubt if the steel age is an advance upon the flint age. I am indifferent. It is the evolution of the soul to which the intellect and all our faculties have to be devoted. I have no difficulty in imaginning the possibility of a man armoured after the modern style making some lasting and new discovery for mankind, but I have nothing but a bit of flint and a nail for lighting his path or his matchlock ever singing new hymns of praise and delivering to an aching world a message of peace and goodwill upon earth. A plea for the spinning wheel is a plea for recognizing the dignity of labour.

I claim that in losing the spinning wheel we lost our left lung. We are, therefore, suffering from galloping consumption. The restoration of the wheel arrests the progress of the fell disease. There are certain things which all must do in all climes. The

spinning wheel is the thing which all must turn in the Indian clime for the transition stage at any rate and the vast majority must for all times.

It was our love of foreign cloth that ousted the wheel from its position of dignity. Therefore, I consider it a sin to wear foreign cloth. I must confess that I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and, therefore, sinful. Thus the economics that permit one country to prey upon another are immoral. It is sinful to buy and use articles made by sweated, labour. It is sinful to eat American wheat and let my neighbour, the grain dealer, starve for want of custom. Similarly it is sinful for me to wear the latest finery of Regent Street, when I know that if I had but the things woven by the neighbouring spinners and weavers, that would have clothed me, and fed and clothed them. On the knowledge of my sin bursting upon me, I must consign the foreign garments to the flames and thus purify myself, and thenceforth rest content with the rough Khadi made by my neighbours. On knowing that my neighbours may not, having given up the occupation, take kindly to the spinning wheel, I must take it up myself and thus make it popular.

I venture to suggest to the Poet that the clothes I ask him to burn must be and are his. If they had to his knowledge belonged to the poor or the ill-clad, he would long ago have restored to the poor that was theirs. In burning *my* foreign clothes I burn my shame, I must refuse to insult the naked by giving them clothes they do not need instead of giving them work which they sorely need. I will not commit the sin of becoming their patron, but on learning that I had assisted in impoverishing them, I would give them a privileged position and give them neither crumbs nor cast off clothing, but the best of my food and clothes and associate myself with them in work.

Nor is the scheme of Non-co-operation or Swadeshi an exclusive doctrine. My modesty has prevented me from declaring from the house-top that the message of Non-co-operation, Non-violence and Swadeshi, is a message to the world. It must fall flat, if it does not bear fruit in the soil where it has been delivered. At the present moment India has nothing to share with the world save her degradation, pauperism and plagues. Is it her ancient Shastras that we should send to the world ? Well, they are printed

in many editions, and an incredulous and idolatrous world refuses to look at them, because we, the heirs and custodians, do not live them. Before, therefore, I can think of sharing with the world, I must possess. Our Non-co-operation is neither with the English nor with the West. Our Non-co-operation is with the system the English have established, with the material civilization and its attendant greed and exploitation of the weak. Our Non-co-operation is a retirement within ourselves. Our Non-co-operation is a refusal to co-operate with the English administrators on their own terms. We say to them, 'Come and co-operate with us on our terms, and it will be well for us, for you and the world.' We must refuse to be lifted off our feet. A drowning man cannot save others. In order to be fit to save others, we must try to save ourselves. Indian nationalism is not exclusive, nor aggressive, nor destructive. It is health-giving, religious and, therefore, humanitarian. India must learn to live before she can aspire to die for humanity. The mice which helplessly find themselves between the cat's teeth acquire no merit from their enforced sacrifice.

True to his poetical instinct, the Poet lives for the morrow and would have us do likewise. He presents to our admiring gaze the beautiful picture of the birds early in the morning siging hymns of praise as they soar into the sky. These birds had their day's food and soard with rested wings in whose veins new blood had flown during the previous night. But I have had the pain of watching birds who, for want of strength, could not be coaxed even into a flutter of their wings. The human bird under the Indian sky gets up weaker than when he pretended to retire. For millions it is an eternal vigil or an eternal trance. It is an indescribably painful state which has to be experienced, to be realized. I found it impossible to soothe suffering patients with a song from Kabir. The hungry millions ask for one poem—invigorating food. They cannot be given it. They must earn it. And they can earn only by the sweat of their brow.

In these verses is contained for me the whole truth of the spinning wheel as an indispensable sacrament for the India of today. If we will take care of today God will take care of the morroow.

23

THE POET AND THE CHARKHA*

M. K. GANDHI

When Sir Rabindranath's criticism of the Charkha was published some time ago, several friends asked me to reply to it. Being heavily engaged I was unable then to study it in full. But I had read enough of it to know its trend. I was in no hurry to reply. Those who had read it were too much agitated or influenced to be able to appreciate what I might have then written even if I had the time. Now, therefore, is really the time for me to write on it and to ensure a dispassionate view being taken of the Poet's criticism or my reply if such it may be called.

The criticism is a sharp rebuke to Acharya Ray for his impatience of the Poet's and Acharya Seal's position regarding the Charkha, and a gentle rebuke to me for my exclusive and excessive love of it. Let the public understand that the Poet does not deny its great economic value. Let them know that he signed the appeal for the All-India Deshabandhu Memorial after he had written his criticism. He signed the appeal after studying its contents carefully and even as he signed it he sent me the message that he had written something on the Charkha which might not quite please me. I knew, therefore, what was coming. But it has not displeased me. Why should mere disagreement with my views displease? If every disagreement were to displease, since no two men agree exactly on all points, life would be a bundle of

Young India, 5 November, 1925.

unpleasant sensations and, therefore, a perfect nuisance. On the contrary the frank criticism pleases me. For our friendship becomes all the richer for our disagreements. Friends to be friends are not called upon to agree even on most points. Only diagreement must have no sharpness, much less bitterness, about them. And I gratefully admit that there is none about the Poet's criticism.

I am obliged to make these prefatory remarks as dame rumour has whispered that jealousy is the root of all that criticism. Such baseless suspicion betrays an atmosphere of weakness and intolerance. A little reflection must remove all ground for such a cruel charge. Of what should the Poet be jealous in me? Jealousy presupposes the possibility of rivalry. Well, I have never succeeded in writing a single rhyme in my life. There is nothing of the Poet about me. I cannot aspire after his greatness. He is the undisputed master of it. The world today does not possess his equal as a poet. My Mahatmaship has no relation to the Poet's undisputed position. It is time to realize that our fields are absolutely different and at no point over-lapping. The Poet lives in a magnificent world of his own creation—his world of ideas. I am a slave of somebody else's creation—the spinning wheel. The Poet makes his *gopis* dance to the tune of his flute. I wander after my beloved Sita. the Charkha, and seek to deliver her from the ten-headed monster from Japan, Manchester, Paris, etc. The Poet is an inventor, he creates, destroys and recreates. I am an explorer and having discovered a thing I must cling to it. The Poet presents the world with new and attractive things from day to day. I can merely show the hidden possibilities of old and even worn out things. The world easily finds an honourable place for the magician who produces new and dazzling things. I have to struggle laboriously to find a corner for my worn-out things. Thus, there is no competition between us. But, I may say in all humility that we complement each other's activity.

The fact is that the Poet's criticism is a poetic licence and he who takes it literally is in danger of finding himself in an awkward corner. An ancient poet has said that Solomon arrayed in all his glory was not like one of the lilies of the field. He clearly referred to the natural beauty and innocence of the lily contrasted with the artificiality of Solomon's glory and his sinfulness in spite of his many good deeds. Or take the poetical

licence in 'It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven'. We know that no camel has ever passed through the eye of a needle and we know too that rich men like Janaka have entered the Kingdom of Heaven. Or take the beautiful simile of human teeth being likened to the pomegranate seed. Foolish women who have taken the poetical exaggeration literally have been found to disfigure and even harm their teeth. Painters and poets are obliged to exaggerate the proportions of their figures in order to give true perspective. Those, therefore, who take the Poet's denunciation of the Charkha literally will be doing an injustice to the Poet and an injury to themselves.

The Poet does not, he is not expected, he had no need, to read *Young India*. All he knows about the movement is what he has picked up from table-talk. He has, therefore, denounced what he imagined to be the excesses of the Charkha cult.

He thinks, for instance, that I want everybody to spin the whole of his or her time to the exclusion of all other activity, that is to say, that I want the Poet to forsake his muse, the farmer his plough, the lawyer his brief and the doctor his lancet. So far is this from truth that I have asked no one to abandon his calling, but on the contrary to adorn it by giving every day only thirty minutes to spinning as sacrifice for the whole nation. I have indeed asked the famishing man or woman who is idle for want of any work whatsoever to spin for a living and the half-starved farmer to spin during his leisure hours to supplement his slender resources. If the Poet span half an hour daily his poetry would gain in richness. For it would then represent the poor man's wants and woes in a more forcible manner than now.

The Poet thinks that the Charkha is calculated to bring about a deathlike sameness in the nation and thus imagining he would shun it if he could. The truth is that the Charkha is intended to realize the essential and living oneness of interest among India's myriads. Behind the magnificent and kaleidoscopic variety one discovers in nature a unity of purpose, design and form which is equally unmistakable. No two men are absolutely alike, not even twins, and yet there is much that is indispensably common to all mankind. And behind the commonness of form there is the same life pervading all. The idea of sameness or

oneness was carried by Shankara to its utmost logical and natural limit and he exclaimed that there was only one Truth, one God-Brahman and all form, *nama*, *rupa* was illusion or illusory, evanescent. We need not debate whether what we see is unreal; and whether the real behind the unreality is what we do not see. Let both be equally real if you will. All I say is that there is sameness, identity or oneness behind the multiplicity and variety. And so do I hold that behind a variety of occupations there is an indispensable sameness also of occupation. Is not agriculture common to the vast majority of mankind ? Even so was spinning common not long ago to a vast majority of mankind. Just as both prince and peasant must eat and clothe themselves, so must both labour for supplying their primary wants. The prince may do so if only by way of symbol and sacrifice but that much is indispensable for him if he will be true to himself and his people. Europe may not realize this vital necessity at the present moment, because it has made of exploitation of non-European races a religion. But it is a false religion bound to perish in the near future. The non-European races will not for ever allow themselves to be exploited. I have endeavoured to show a way out that is peaceful, humane and, therefore, noble. It may be rejected. If it is, the alternative is a tug-of-war, in which each will try to pull down the other. Then when non-Europeans will seek to exploit the Europeans, the Truth of the Charkha will have to be realized. Just as, if we are to live we must breathe, not air imported from England nor eat food so imported, so many we not import cloth made in England. I do not hesitate to carry the doctrine to its logical limit and say that Bengal dare not import her cloth even from Bombay or from Banga Lakshmi. If Bengal will live her natural and free life without exploiting the rest of India or the world outside, she must manufacture her cloth in her own villages as she grows her corn there. Mahinery has its place; it has come to stay. But it must not be allowed to displace the necessary human labour. An improved plough is a good thing. But if by some chance one man could plough up by some mechanical invention of his the whole of the land of India and control all the agricultural produce and if the millions had no other occupation, they would starve, and being idle, they would become dunces, as many have already become. There is hourly danger of many more being reduced to that unenviable

state. I would welcome every improvement in the cottage machine; but I know it is criminal to displace the hand labour by the introduction of power-driven spindles, unless one is at the same time ready to give millions of farmers some other occupations in their homes.

The Irish analogy does not take us very far. It is perfect in so far as it enables us to realize the necessity of economic co-operation. But Indian circumstances being different, the method of working out co-operation is necessarily different. For Indian distress every effort at co-operation has to centre round the Charkha if it is to apply to the majority of the inhabitants of this vast peninsula, 1900 miles long and 1500 miles broad. A Sir Gangaram may give us a model farm which can be no model for the penniless Indian farmer who has hardly two to three acres of land which every day runs the risk of being still further cut up.

Round the Charkha, that is, amidst the people who have shed their idleness and who have understood the value of co-operation, a national servant would build up a programme of anti-malaria campaign, improved sanitation, settlement of village disputes, conservation and breeding of cattle and hundreds of other beneficial activities. Wherever Charkha work is fairly established, all such ameliorative activity is going on, according to the capacity of the villagers and the workers concerned.

It is not my purpose to traverse all the Poet's arguments in detail. Where the differences between us are not fundamental,—and these I have endravoured to state,—there is nothing in the Poet's argument which I cannot endorse and still maintain my position regarding the Charkha. The many things about the Charkha which he has ridiculed I have never said. The merits I have claimed for the Charkha remain undamaged by the Poet's battery.

One thing, and one thing only, has hurt me, the Poet's belief, again picked up from table-talk, that I look upon Rammohan Roy as a 'Pigmy'! Well, I have never anywhere described that great reformer as a pigmy, much less regarded him as such. He is to me as much a giant as he is to the Poet. I do not remmember any occasion save one when I had to use Rammohan Roy's name. That was in connection with Western

education. This was on the Cuttack sands now four years ago. What I do remember having said was that it was possible to attain highest culture without Western education. And when someone mentioned Rammohan Roy, I remember having said that he was a pigmy compared to the unknown authors, say of the Upanishads. This is altogether different from looking upon Rammohan Roy as a pigmy. I do not think meanly of Tennyson if I say that he was a pigmy before Milton or Shakespeare. I claim that I enhance the greatness of both. If I adore the Poet as he knows I do, in spite of differences between us, I am not likely to disparage the greatness of the man who made the great reform movement of Bengal possible and of which the Poet is one of the finest of fruits.

24

TAGORE, POET OF MANKIND

A.L. PHILIPPIDE*

Soon after W.B. Yeats' enthusiastic presentation, in his preface to the English translation of Gitanjali in 1912, of Tagore to Europe and to mankind, the poet became known the world over : indeed he found a second homeland in the consciousness of entire mankind.

The feelings experienced by all those who first read him in the English translation made by the author himself and shortly after in all the main languages of the world, were feelings of wonder and enchantment, of delighted surprise, as Yeats puts it in his preface : "These prose translations from Rabindranath Tagore have stirred my blood as nothing has for years".

Those feelings, like a revelation of great import, were all the deeper because Tagore offered poetical thoughts of great richness in a clear language, with simple, though most suggestive means of expression. If we consider poetical thought as that activity of the mind which, surveying the usual succession of phenomena, finds in the world similarities and affinities of divergences and contrasts which surprise as while evoking feelings of beauty, then what we novels and essays, is truly poetical.

Tagore brought a fresh, a novel flow into the stream of world poetry, for it is a great lyrical outflow such as the world had not known for long and which, while, bearing the stamp of a national

* An Eminent Rumanian Writer.

character, also had the features of universality, for it included human features that are essential in all ages and places—features we find in the Greek tragic playwrights, in Shakespeare, in the French classics of the 17th century, in Goethe and in Tolstoi.

Tagore's poetry is in its essence transfiguration, interpretation, and a very personal reflection of reality which calls forth a response from the sensitiveness of everyone. This blend of powerful individuality and of general human interest is an essential feature of Tagore's poetical creation and closely linked to his fundamental concept of the harmony existing between the individual and the universal—a concept which is the foundation of Indian culture and which Tagore brilliantly set forth in his *Sadhana*: "India put all her emphasis on the harmony that exists between the individual and the universal." She felt we could have no communication whatever with our surroundings if they were absolutely foreign to us. Man's complaint against nature is that he has to acquire most of his necessaries by his own efforts. Yes, but his efforts are not in vain; he is reaping success every day, and that shows there is a rational connection between him and nature, for we never can make anything our own except that which is truly related to us.

The whole of Tagore's poetry is devoted to Light. And by this I do not mean that his verse (and his lyrical prose, which makes up a considerable part of his prose) takes light for its subject, or that his poetical creation is a hymn to light. I only mean that an impulse towards everything that is luminous—in the concrete as well as in the abstract—is ever present in Tagore's poetry: "Light, my light, the word-filling light, the eye-kissing light, heart-sweetening light!"

> "Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the centre of my life; the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love; the sky opens, the wind runs wild, laughter passes over the earth."

This impulse towards light is an impulse towards joy; it is the very joy of life, it is love for life: "Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song—the joy that makes the earth flow over in the riotous excess of the grass, the joy that sets the twin brothers, life and death, dancing over the wild world, the joy that sweeps in with the tempest, shaking and waking all life with laughter, the joy that sits still with its tears on the open red lotus of pain, and

the joy that throws everything it has upon the dust, and knows not a word."

This sweeping impulse towards joy is no impediment to the poet's feeling, experiencing, having a deep insight into the sorrows and griefs of mankind through profound sympathy. Like the impulse towards joy and light, profound sympathy with the destitute and the lowly, seen especially in his tales, is a consequence of deep communion with the whole world; it is implied, included, in this comprehensive feeling on which, as we have already shown, Tagore's personality and his poetical creation are founded.

Tagore possesses to the highest degree the feeling for active beauty, for dynamic beauty; passive beauty, the object of barren contemplation, does not appeal to him because it is lifeless, because it is no palpable reality but an abstraction of the mind, which calls forth no emotion. That is why, in Tagore's outlook, the quest for beauty goes hand in hand and is in perfect agreement with the quest for truth : "Every day science is penetrating into the region formerly marked as unexplored or inexplorable. Our sense of beauty is similarly engaged in ever pushing on its conquests. Truth is everywhere, therefore everything is the object of our knowledge. Beauty is omnipresent, therefore, everything is capable of giving us Joy." This last sentence is deeply significant for Tagore's concept of beauty. When he says that everything is capable of giving us joy, he implies that we should not be content with the beauty that reveals itself to the eye immediately and is easily discernible, but that we should seek and discover the hidden beauty in things—in all things capable of giving us luminous, healthy joy, a joy which is consequently endowed with moral purity.

Deep optimism underlies such a concept. There is sense in the world then and life is viewed in its constant development. Thanks to Tagore, readers the world over were made aware of the real essence of the old Indian wisdom and thus discared the erroneous views they had on that wisdom. Indeed, especially since Schopenhauer, a view had taken root among European readers that the ancient wisdom of India was based on passive contemplation and gradual sinking into nothingness into non-consciousness and non-awareness, into indifference, life being merely a stage preparatory to that finale. In *Sadhana*, that admirable collection of essays that bears the significant sub-title of "The Realisation of Life," Tagore reveals the true, the luminous

import of the Upanishads. In place of a passive life and of static contemplation, of an ideal of indifference and unawareness, which the Europeans had been wont to consider as the essence of Indian wisdom, Tagore's *Sadhana* sets forth an altogether different concept which might be said to stand at the opposite pole. In his preface to that work, Tagore himself points out that "in these papers, it may be hoped, Western readers will have an opportunity of coming into touch with the ancient spirit of India as revealed in our sacred texts and manifested in the life of today." And in the essay "Individual and Universe", he states : "Some modern philosophers of Europe, who are directly or indirectly indebted to the Upanishads, far from realising that debt, maintain that the Brahma of India is a mere abstraction, a negation of all that is in the world. In a word, that the Infinite Being is to be found nowhere except in metaphysics. It may be, that such a doctrine has been and still is prevalent with a section of our countrymen. But this is certainly not in accordance with the pervading spirit of the Indian mind."

This luminous assertion of life and to the immortality of life, which Tagore founds on the texts of the Upanishads (Everything has sprung from immortal life and is vibrating with life, for life is immense) by no means comes into contradiction, but is on the contrary in perfect agreement with European humanism of Greek and Latin origin, which like Tagore assets that life develops infinitely and is ever perfected. There is no vestige here of a doctrine of final nothingness, of extinction; quite the reverse : there is clear and luminous thought striving after permanence and certitude.

"The Problem of Self", an essay included in his *Sadhana*, gives a realistic interpretation of the dualism of illuston and reality : *maya* and *satyam*—appearance and truth - a dualism which is a tradition in Indian philosophy. It is an interpretation which shatters another erroneous view current in Europe, namely that in Indian philosophy the world is in the final analysis an illusion, a vain image, delusion, *maya* being considered as the expression of this cosmic illusion, of this universal nothingness. Tagore shatters this misinterpretation. The world is not dominated by appearances, by illusion, but by reality; illusion is only accidental and ever overwhelmed by truth and essence : "Everything has this dualism of *maya* and *satyam*, appearance and truth, Words

are *maya* where, they are merely sound and finite. They are *satyam* where they are ideas and infinite."

Far from being considered as the supreme answer to the world, *maya*, on the contrary, should be looked upon as a transient error that the self must discard. The individual is ride of *maya*, of the destructive peril of illusion, when it communes with the universe, that is, when individual consciousness becomes part of the general consciousness. It is then that the self attains "deliverance from the thraldom of *maya*, of appearance which springs from *avidya*, from ignorance"; it is then that the self attains its "emancipation in the perfect repose in truth, in the perfect activity in goodness, and in the perfect union in love". Indian wisdom does not advocate renunciation of the world. Aware of the erroneous views current in the world in this respect, Tagore combats them in a lecture on "Soul Consciousness" when he asserts : "I have already warned my hearers and must once again warn them against the idea that the teachers of India preached a renunciation of the world and of self which leads only to the blank emptiness of negation. Their aim was the realisation of the soul or, in other words, gaining the world in perfection and truth". It may fairly be asserted that, thanks to Tagore, the masses of readers throughout the world for the first time had a correct notion of Indian philosophy.

Truth, goodness and love : Tagore's poetry and his essential impulse towards beauty blends harmoniously. In Tagore's concepts, truth is inseparable from beauty, the two supporting and supplementing one another and acquiring greater vigour and brilliance in association. Nothing is farther from Tagore's concept than the idea of beauty divorced from truth and morality as advocated by Poe in his *Poetic Principle.* For Tagore, beauty is closely associated with morality, and artistic perfection is inseparable from moral perfection, though there is no didactic or moralizing intention underlying artistic creation : "Through our sense of beauty", Tagore says in his essay "The Realization of Beauty" included in *Sadhana*, "we realise harmony in the universe". And in the same essays he says : "The expression of beauty in our life moves in goodness and love towards the infinite." In the final analysis beauty is one with truth : "This is the ultimate object of our existence, that we must ever know that beauty is truth, truth beauty."

Lecturing in Europe and America, Tagore brought this

luminous message of true Indian wisdom to the whole world. His works of great poetic beauty imbued with a vigorous moral strain and full of great love for man, stress being laid on sympathy with the humble and the destitute and, implicitly, on social justice, are in keeping with the most fervid aspirations of our time, the aspirations of the peoples for peace. In Rumania, Tagore's works are well known as they have been abundantly translated. The bibliography of Rumanian translations from Tagore is a comprehensive one, for the main volumes of his verse have been translated by different authors. And Tagore's lecture in Rumania in November 1926, made an unforgettable impression.

A creator of poetical essence, a deep and subtle thinker, a consummate artist and at the same time an impassioned seeker after moral perfection, Tagore is a brilliant example of humaneness, honoured by entire mankind.

25

TAGORE, THE POET PAR EXCELLENCE

NANDINI MURALL

Indo-Anglian writing is an umbrella term which brings under its fold the writings of poets/authors who are Indians by birth and whose mother-tongue is not English. The literary output of these writers is in English. These literatures have succeeded in effectively using the English language as a medium to communicate their thoughts and feelings Indo-Anglian writing is a by-product of British Imperialism in India. Its roots can be traced to the decision of the British to implement English as the *lingua franca* (official language) in a multi-lingual country.

In the galaxy of Indo-Anglian writers. Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu and R.K. Narayan dazzle with a brilliance that has won them enduring popularity with succeeding generations of readers down the ages.

Rabindranath Tagore, a scion of an affluent Bengali family was born on May 7, 1861. Tagore was a multi-faceted genius—poet, novelist, short story writer, playwright, composer, philosopher, educator and painter.

Interestingly enough, Tagore is considered an Indo-Anglian writer although he wrote only one poem in English called "The Child" All his other the original Bengali version "Gitanjali" is poems, short stories and plays were written in his mother-tongue, Bengali. Most of his works were translated by the poet himself into English.

Tagore's poetic genius blossomed when he was barely seven

years old. Having lived to a ripe old 80 years, Tagore was involved in creative writing for over seven decades.

Rabindranath Tagore's magnum opus is "Gitanjali" which won him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. It is a sequence of 103 lyrics translated from a "song offering" by the poet to the Superme Being. We have the three-fold image of the Singer, the Song and the Lord Poem 35 of the "Gitanjali" is an oft-anthologised piece "Where the mind is without fear". An ardent nationalist, the poet prays for a "Heaven of Freedom"—spiritual and ideological freedom to dawn on his country.

Tagore's poetry is a combination of lyricism, love for man, Nature and picturesqueness put together His poems are characterised by "a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" and are hauntingly melodious.

Tagore was a trail-blazer in the field of education. He dedicated the last 20 years of his life to Vishwa-Bharathi—an international seat of learning set up in 1921 at Shantiniketan, on the outskirts of Calcutta.

Vishwa Bharathi was conceived as a blend of the best of the oriental and western cultures.

Tagore wished that, "on the shores of India men of all races and creed could find their place of union," with the motto. "Where the whole world becomes a single nest". Rabindranath Tagore was a poet of universal religion, and world brotherhood.

"Gurudev" was called "The Great sentinel" by Mahatma Gandhi. In an age of declining spirituality he was the guardian angel of the ideals of love, joy, freedom and harmony.

26

THE SHORT STORIES OF RABINDRANATH

SRI KUMAR BANERJEE*

I

The short stories of Rabindranath present the truest and most complete picture of Bengali life and manners in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth. They are not so much a survey and assessment of facts as a swift intuitive dive into the deepest springs of the spirit. Within their short compass, we find the whole pageantry of Bengali life unrolled before us with its emotions, dreams and ardours, its psychological complexities, its anomalies of conduct and eccentricities of character, its searching social criticisms—the pity, the absurdity, the romance and glamour of it all and a strange unrest preluding a hardening of the spirit and a change-over to a period of uneasy experiment culminating in a total break with the past.

What a many-sided picture of Bengali society, with all its various tints and shadows, its diverse threads of interest, its peculiar twists of life-view, its oddities of humour and character rooted in the social organism is revealed in these pregnant pages ! Society which had been the most dominant factor in the life of the individual in Bengal, curbing and directing it in general and posing peculiar problems before it in exceptional situations is present in these short stories as an all-pervasive influence. The joint-family system in which blood-strangers were not infrequently

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admitted, has created many piquant situations not to be found elsewhere. A younger brother withstands the full pressure of his own section of the family io upholding the validity of his dead brother's will in favour of his widowed wife. This is an instance of heroism in humble life which will miss its appreciation in a different family arrangement. Two first cousins, separated by family feuds, feel a yearning for each other's society inexplicable to people otherwise nurtured. Two strangers, living fraternally under the same roof and plagued with quarrelsome wives, have their respective positions curiously reversed by a sudden stroke of ill-fortune, benevolently engineered by one of the partners. The dependant now becomes the master and the whilom master takes a back seat. The old prosperity is restored, thanks to the selfless prudence of the younger man. But the inner pathos deepens, the senior partner sinking into a deeper apathy and frustration and never recovering his old buoyancy and masterful authority.

The family circle also sometimes draws in outsiders and accidental visitors who by forming a strange network of relations with the family create curious complications. Sometimes the visitor is a parasite who is championed by one member of the family but frankly regarded as an interloper by the others, and family equilibrium is only restored with the expulsion of the intruder. Sometimes again, the visitor endears himself to the whole family and is accepted as the prospective son-in-law of the darling daughter; but Nature in her grand detachment from human ties and her restless whirl lures him away before he is finally caught in the net.

Sometimes again curious stresses develop in the family circle due to strange and abnormal happenings or maladjustment of one kind or another. A woman, hitherto a loving wife turns against her husband for protecting the interests of her infant brother committed to her care by her dying mother. She suffers martyrdom rather than aid and abet the wicked designs of her husband. The eldest son of another well-to-do family develops an aggressive individuality which overrides family conventions and ethics. He champions the cause of the oppressed tenantry against the prevalent feudal code of conduct and suffers disinheritance. But what is more poignantly galling to him is that his own wife refuses to back him up and stands solidly behind the vested interests. In one of the short stories written in a dramatic form

we have a series of sharply contrasted psychological changes brought about by a change of circumstances. A young scapegrace whose father is too strict and mother too indulgent is encouraged in luxury and extravagance by a childless aunt with the passive consent of her good-natured husband. He is adopted at a son by this aunt when too late in life a son is born to her. All at once a strange metamorphosis takes place in his prospects and his aunt's dealings with him. From being the pampered pet of the family, he becomes almost a pest and a nuisance and all sorts of drudgery are imposed on him. From a fairy godmother the aunt turns into a veritable gnome and the poor boy is subjected to all sorts of indignities and humiliations. Driven to the last point of exasperation, he embezzles his office money to pay off his anut's dues and comes with a loaded pistol and threatens to shoot first his boy cousin and then himself. It is now at this fateful moment that his good angel in the shape of his beloved, a girl of a rich family who sticks to him through thick and thin, intervenes, and what threatened to be a grim tragedy has a happy ending.

II

In all these stresses and strains, the impact of love is very little in evidence, as is usual with the normal tenor of Bengali domesticity. The shattering and explosive influence of love was almost negligible as a factor in family disruptions, almost upto the end of the first decade of the 20th century. Since then love has been the most dominant single influence in all such break-ups, economic factors and a general incompatibility of temper being the rest in order of importance. Rabindrahath's story *The Ruined Home* is the precursor of this new vein which has almost monopolised the Bengali short story of today, faithfully following the trend of social change and the virtual disappearance of the old inhibitions. This is not strictly a short story : it sums up a series of changes spreading over a long time, instead of being confined to a significant moment or a single outstanding event. It is a masterly study of the gradual, almost imperceptible stages through which forbidden love makes its way through the barricades of protected relationships. The stages are : (i) a vacuum in wedded love brought about not wilfully but through involuntary, unconscious lapses, so that the moral sense remains unwarned;

(ii) an innocent intimacy with a junior relative resulting from common interests which can be indulged in with apparent safety; (iii) secrecy which feeds the just smouldering flame, and jealousy which fans it into strength and consciousness; (iv) indifference in one of the parties which accentuates the passionate eagerness of the other, and (v) despair which drives the passion inward and imparts to it a morbid intensity and a brooding obsession amounting almost to hallucination. All these stages have been knit up with a wonderful psychological closeness of study and woven into the very teuture of Charu's infatuation for Amal. In writing this story Rabindranath not only produced one of the great masterpieces of world literature : he pointed the way to the future with an almost prophetic prevision.

Marriage which in Bengali society is more a family than individual affair, has contributed its crop of complications and provoked some of the keenest shafts of satire in Rabindranath's short stories. The dig is mainly at the mercenary spirit underlying the negotiations, the insistence on extortionate dowry and the utter lack of decency and humanity among the bridegroom's party. But Rabindranath is too essentially a poet and imaginative creator to rely mainly upon the crude motive of social criticism. Each case of trouble and conflict is individualised : the bride, the groom and their people are no mere targets to aim the shafts of satire and condemnation at. Some cases conform to the recognised pattern and are pathetic in their appeal. The happy or sad end generally depends on the personality of the bridegroom and his power of asserting himself. Generally he is a dummy toeing the line of his elders with sheepish submissiveness. He is a passive spectator of the tragedy that he has not the courage to avert. On rare occasions he defies authority and leaves the paternal roof along with his wife. In one story where the bride's father is an exceptionally strong man, the marriage is broken off and the rejected suitor is left to pay unavailing courtship to the girl who lives her own independent life. In *The Wife's Letter*, vitriolic indignation and withering contempt are hissed-forth in every line against the heartlessness and tame subservience to convention in average Bengali society that needlessly aggravate the sufferings of womanhood. The family against which these sarcasms are hurled are guilty more of omission than of commission, but for society in the abstract, it is a well-deserved castigation.

III

Extra-martial relations and thwarted love leave their own trail of perhaps yet more poignant suffering, though the scope for them is not as wide in Bengali as in Western society. In one of these stories a Judge awards the capital sentence to a fallen woman who, deserted by her last lover, in a fit of desperation, had killed her child and attempted suicide. A signet-ring betrays the forgotten fact that she, as an innocent girl of a middle class family, had been seduced and left to a life of shame by this very Judge in his youth. The effect of this shock of discovery is overwhelming on all concerned including the reader. In *The Last Night*, a young husband on his death-bed yearns in vain for the presence and some token of love from an indifferent and pleasure-loving wife whose delicate nerves cannot stand the sight and odour of the sick room. The pathos of lingering unconsoled death is intensified beyond endurance by the tissue of well-meant deceptions woven by a loving aunt about the imaginary ministrations of the heartless wife, to soften the pangs of the dying youth. The whole atmosphere of a sickroom with its morbid fancies, distorted pictures of life, shadows lingering in the corners and whispers of illusive sentiments is brought out with a wonderful vividness. The snapping of marriage bonds has its comic episodes too, as when a too intellectual husband who uses his wife as a household drudge and is blind to what passes in her heart misses her one morning and never finds her back. A wife, deserted by her hushand on the plea of a call of religion, practises the sternest austerities to make herself worthy of him, only to find, after an interval of twelve years that he was employed as a commercial agent of an American trades company. While he was supposed to be in the Himalayas practising yoga, he was really sailing the seas on an American liner.

Some of the best stories of Rabindranath deal with the life of landlords. The feudal system was not merely an economic institution in Bengal; it created a caste of people with their special prejudices and outlook on life, their special code of ethics and relations to the society around them. Himself a landlord, Rabindranath shows special insight into the moods and character of the class. In Rabindranath, they are not, as with some later Bengali writers, near-extinct volcanoes, but are elderly people who

have developed certain idiosyncrasies, slightly ridiculous but mainly amiable, who harbour illusions and look upon life with big uncomprehending eyes, like overgrown children brooding over old memories and feeling as aliens in a world governed by other laws. *Grandfather* is a classical example of the species who dream of their vanished splendours and fail to see the crabbed forbidding present. In *Rashmoni's Son* we have a doting father bred in the old feudal traditions and hoping for impossible favours of fortune, and a severely practical mother, wide-awake to reality, but treating her husband to the accustomed luxuries so that he may not feel any change. The boy who takes after his mother, dies of an overstrain and leaves the whole family shorn of all illusions and purpose in life. The story is reminiscent in its stark tragedy specially in the mother's stoicism, of Wordsworth's Michael.

IV

But stories with a special purpose, however well conceived and brilliantly executed, do not constitute Rabindranath's genius. He is at his best when he brings to bear his poetic perceptions and imaginative intuition upon life. The short story in Bengali literature has always been the last resort of the poetic vision even in a predominantly unpoetic age. But with Rabindranath this poetic beauty is no mere superimposition upon an essentially factual narrative : it is the very centre of appeal, around which psychological analysis, profound reflections on life and destiny, stress of action and conflict, and living and growing characters tend to converge. *Shubha* is a dumb, witless girl who is entirely at one with the silent goings on of nature, the life and joy in grass and leaf and running water which look out from a half-conscious human face. *Mahamaya* is the very embodiment of the sombre mystery of an August night, cloud-canopied and lightning streaked. She smiles with a swift. dazzling flash and then buries herself in an impenetrable veil of inaccessibility. In *Hopes Abortive*, we find an old scene of feudal romance re-enacted amidst the mist-shrouded solitude of a modern hill-station, a story of love, heroism, constancy and sacrifice suddenly brought to nought, wrecked on the inscrutable contradictions of human nature. In *The Professor*, we find high romance touched with light satire, and

the heroine, the source of tender imaginings and high-flighted hopes, is strangely attuned to the sylvan beauty and peace of the surrounding landscape. There are characters in Rabindranath's stories, particularly young-folk, whose truant moods and untamed vagrancy of spirit are the very human counter-parts of a Nature associated with, yet really aloof from, man with his narrow, ephemeral interests and his restricted round of passions.

In some other stories, we have the deepest emotions of which a Bengali heart is susceptible, springing to life in the normal tenor of Bengali life. *Postmaster* and *Kabuliwala*, two of the earliest stories, show Rabindranath's power of evoking the most poignant feelings in situations in which normal family ties play no part. Casual attachments among unequals sometimes assume an overmastering intensity, all the more poignant and pathetic because of their frail, transitory nature. In *One Night*, a love carelessly thrown away returns at a crucial moment to haunt the mind with self-reproach. In *Cloud and Sunshine*, a relationship formed in rural surroundings is remembered through the intervening years and lights up the last sad days of an old man with a ray of tender gratitude. Two out of the most outstanding stories bringing out the full emotional stresses and depths of a usually uneventful Bengali life are *Intervening Shadow* and *Return of Sight*. In the first, a woman in her middle-age feels the revival of the fierce intensity of love, goaded by jealousy for her husband's attentions to her young co-wife, a late flowering of youthful passion, somewhat ridiculous in a matron past her prime. The young wife dies but her shadow forms an impassable barrier between the middle-aged couple, once more thrown into intimate companionship. The psychology is wonderfully handled with a grace and beauty untinged by false romance. The second one is a still more penetrating study of a blind wife, whose eyesight was lost through the mishandling of her husband, a young doctor who rated his medical skill too high. The husband in a fit of remorse takes a solemn vow never to take a second wife, but his good resolve weakens. He is eager to contract a second marriage, but his infatuation is happily cheeked by a rival forestalling him. The picture of the gradual coarsening of the husband's nature, narrated not directly but through the unerring intuition of the blind wife, is a marvel of psychological understanding. Never has the ideal of Hindu wifehood, so patient and forgiving, so tender and yet

without a touch of over-idealisation, been painted with such veracity, such poignant and yet restrained pathos as in this story.

Rabindranath's mastery in an allied domain, viz., the supernatural, is equally manifest. Supernaturalism is instinctive in the Bengali mind, whose firm conviction in the continuity of life after death makes spirit manifestations appear almost like an everday reality. In *The Hungery Stone* a palace of the medieval Muslim period becomes alive at dead of night with all its amorous revels, the vanished splendours of by-gone days and carts a lasting spell upon its presentday inmates. *In the middle of the night*, the enquiry imagined to be made of the husband by the spirit of a departed wife regarding the second wife appear to him as living reality. In *Bereft of Jewellery*, a story is manufactured of the apparition of a dead wife who died with all her ornaments on her body, appearing before her husband and apprising him of the circumstances attending her mysterious end.

The short stories of Rabindranath are an imperishable record of Bengali life before the changes of presentday modernity overtook it.

27

RABINDRANATH TAGORE—POET AND HUMANIST

KRISHNA R. KRIPALANI*

It is eighteen years since Rabindranath passed away. He was born in 1861, when India lay prostrate at the feet of the British. The great mutiny had been ruthlessly quelled. The ancient ruling classes had been either wiped out or lay cringing in the dust. India had attained the peace of the desert. She had ceased to be creative. Politically, she had lost her freedom and culturally her soul. The age of toadies reactionaries had begun, those who aped Western ways and those who sought consolation in the bondage of immemorial tradition and dogma.

Eighty years later when Tagore died, the face of India had changed. Culturally she had recovered her self-respect and politically she was about to launch the great rebellion of August 1942. True, the credit for this political awakening must go mainly to the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. But political awakening and cultural consciousness do not grow in watertight compartments. Their roots are linked together and are ultimately fed by a common stream of creative inspiration. Of this creative inspiration, Tagore was one of the main channels.

MORE THAN A POET

Though Tagore was essentially a poet, he was more than a mere poet, as Gandhi was more than a mere politician. His

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genius enriched whatever it touched. Like the sun, after which he was named (*rabi* in Bengali, derived from Skt. *ravi*, means the sun), he shed light and warmth on his age, vitalised the mental and moral soil of the land, revealed unknown horizons of thought and spanned the arch that divides the East from the West. The vitality of his genius is truly amazing. No less amazing are the variety and beauty of the literary forms he created. He gave to his people in one lifetime what other peoples have taken centuries to evolve—a language capable of expressing the finest modulations of thought and feeling, a literature worthy to be taught in any university in the world. There was no field of literary activity which was not explored and enriched by his daring adventures, and many of these were virgin fields in Bengali which his hands were the first to stir into fruitfulness. He is one of the world's few writers whose works withstand the challenge of the severest tests of great literature—eastern or western, ancient or modern.

Among modern writers he has the unique distinction that while the most sophisticated Bengali intellectuals delight in his verse and learned professors write volumes on them, the simple unsophisticated folk in the congested lanes of Calcutta or in the remote villages of Bengal sing his songs with rapture. Each change of the season, each aspect of Bengal's rich landscape, every undulation of the human heart, in sorrow or in joy, has found its voice in some song of his. The mute, who have no creative expression of their own, sing his songs and feel the weight of their dumbness relieved.

All this, however, is true only for those in whose language he wrote and sang. Those who read him only in translations can have no conception either of the scope or the quality of his genius. To know him one must read him in original Bengali and listen to his songs being sung. Then is one held by a double feeling of delight and awe. What to call him who is unsurpassed as a lyric poet, whose dramatic dialogues have caught in immortal words the profoundest poses of human conflict, the grandeur and subtility of whose religious verse is like the voice of the Upanishads quivering in accents of human intimacy, whose short stories place him alongside of Chekhov, and who is unique as the author of an inexhaustible stream of songs as exquisite in their melody as in the words which embody it! "He is a master, a master!"

cried Turgeniev, at a loss for words to describe the genius of Tolstoy. Even so, one is dumbfounded with a mixed feeling of wonder and joy at the magnificent outflow of Tagore's creative activity.

Though Tagore was essentially a poet, this is not the occasion to analyse his literary genius. Only those who can read the language in which he wrote can have any idea of the unsurpassed beauty of his literary creations. To the rest of his countrymen Tagore's significance lies in the impulse and direction he gave to the course of our cultural development, and in the example he presented of a genius, passionately devoted to his art and yet consistently dedicated to the service of his people. It is rare to find an artist who is not an egoist or a reformer who is not a fanatic. The most remarkable thing about Tagore's personality, apart from the richness of his genius, is its all-round and harmonious development. The religious, moral, aesthetic and intellectual aspects of his personality were so well developed and well matched that of no one was it more true than of him that he saw life steadily and saw it whole.

There is a tendency to lopsidedness in our Indian character. We are inclined to overvalue certain aspects of life at the expense of others. In our religious zeal we are tempted to repudiate life altogether. In order to attain peace of mind we frown on the very joy of life. Hence he wrote :

"Deliverance is not for me in renunciation;
I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.
No; I will never shut the doors of my senses.
The delights of sight and hearing and touch
will bear thy delight.
Millions of living beings make up the vast fair of this world,
and you ignore it all as a child's play."

In order to preserve the purity of race and to maintain social stability our wise men so divided society in watertight compartments that the rigidity of caste became the greatest curse of our society. Innumerable instances can be given of this tendency to lopsidedness in our character, which makes us at once savage and highly civilized, wise and stupid, kind and cruel, clean and dirty. What we need most is a sane outlook and a balanced character,

so that we can be mainly without being brutal, sensitive without being sentimental, rational without being materialistic, religious without being fanatic, and patriotic without being political humbugs.

If Tagore had been nothing more than a mere poet, a singer of songs and a dreamer of dreams, he would still be remembered as one of the world's immortals. But he was something more. He was human and humane, a fully developed man, a harmonious personality. He was a lover of his people, a patriot whose loyalty embraced all mankind. All his life he pleaded and strove for social justice, for the right of the poor to material well-being, of the citizen to self-government, of the ignorant to knowledge, of the child to unfettered development, of the woman to equal dignity with man. The religion he preached was the religion of man, the renunciation he extolled was not of this world but of the base passions, of cupidity and hatred, the freedom he fought for was not the freedom of one people to exploit another but the freedom of the human personality from all that stifles it, whether it be the tyranny of an external organization or the worse tyranny of man's own blind passion for power.

AS AN EDUCATIONIST

He was a pioneer in the field of national education. For forty years he was content to be a schoolmaster in humble village surroundings, even when he had achieved fame which kings might envy. He was the first to think out for himself and put in practice principles of education which have become now common places of educational theory, if not yet of practice. Today we all know that what the child imbibes at school is far more important than what he learns in college, that the teaching is unreal unless it is through the mother-tongue, that learning through activity is more real than learning through the written word, that true education lies in the training of all the senses instead of merely cramming the mind with memorised knowledge, that culture is something much more than mere academic knowledge, etc. But how many of our countrymen thought of it in 1901 when Tagore started his experiments in education ? Even today how many of us understand the significance of these principles in our national life ? The schoolmaster is still the most neglected, despised and ill-paid

member of our community, despite the fact that Tagore attached more merit to what he taught to children in his school than to the Hibbert Lectures he delivered before a distinguished audience at Oxford.

Gandhiji adopted the scheme of teaching through crafts many years after Tagore had applied it in his school at Santiniketan. Even in the field of rural reconstruction, Tagore had made his first experiments before the Congress or any other national organisation had taken to it seriously. If Tagore had done nothing else, what he aid at Santiniketan and Sriniketan would be sufficient to rank him as one of India's greatest nation-builders.

He had a very healthy contempt for mere agitational politics which he likened to an engine which continually whistles and throws out columns of smoke without ever moving. To the pilots of our ship of destiny his advice was : "Fear not the waves of the sea, but mind the leaks in your own vessel." If we became slaves, it was not because the British are devils but because we were weaklings. We had ceased to believe in ourselves. Instead of tapping the fountain of our own creative energy; we are still picking rags from other people's dustbins. As early as 1906, he wrote : "No one can take away the blessed task of service to the country—it is God-given. Self-rule is eternally within our grasp. . . If we do not take up the work, we lose the right. It is all to our shame if we lose the natural right of service and throw blame on others for the non-discharge of our own duties. It is sad and unfortunate that while we ourselves refrain from service and sacrifice, we expect the mitigation of distress from those who do not feel the natural urge to love and serve but only throw favours out of pity."

This was the core of Gandhiji's philosophy as well, but we have only to glance at our daily newspapers to realise how little this truth is heeded by the great majority of our political orators and leader-writers. If our little politicians do not heed Gandhiji's words, it is little surprising that they have forgotten that Tagore ever uttered them.

How are we to set our house in order ? Tagore's answer was two-fold. Bridge the gulf between the cities and villages. Villages are the real reservoirs of our national strength. Bring back life to the village in its completeness. Make them self-reliant and strong, healthy and happy, rich with the consciousness of the cultural

traditions of their own country and competent to make an efficient use of the modern resources for the improvement of their physical, intellectual and economic condition. Villages are the source of our national vitality. If they decay, the whole nation will degenerate, sooner or later. The gulf between the city and the village must be bridged. Our social institutions and our educational system have both tended to make our national life like a two-storeyed house without a staircase to connect the vast maze of ill-ventilated, germ-infested slums on the ground floor with the rickety, cheap, semi-modernised flats on the upper floor.

Second, remove the cancer or inequality and superstition from the body of our society, No political miracle can be built on the quicksands of social slavery. The same inertia which leads us to the idolatry of dead forms in social institutions will create in our politics prison houses with immovable walls; the narrowness of sympathy which makes it possible for us to impose upon a considerable portion of humanity the galling yoke of inferiority, will create its counterpart in politics and will recoil back on us in the form of tyranny and injustice. Political freedom does not give us freedom when our mind is not free—

> "O my unfortunate country, those whom you have debased,
> they shall drag you down to their own level
> till their shame is yours;
> those whom you have deprived of their human right,
> who stand before you but find no room in your lap,
> they shall drag you down to their own level
> till their shame is yours."

India, said Tagore, treated life in all truth where it was manifold, but insulted it where it was moving. Hence the glory of what we were and the shame of what we are. We who dared so adventurously in the realm of the mind failed to carry this spirit of experiment in the actual business of daily life. We were satisfied with the poise of stillness and did not strive for poise in movement. In other words, we failed to keep pace with the times and had to pay the inevitable penalty. Tagore had no illusion about what is called progress in Western countries, which has come to be synonymous with multiplication of luxuries and worship of mechanised living. By progress he meant a continuous development of the human personality, both individual and corporate. As

he put it, "I believe in life only when it is progressive, and in progress only when it is in harmony with life. I preach the freedom of man from the servitude of the fetish of hugeness, the non-human."

The real conflict, according to him, was not between the East and the West but between man and the machine, between personality and organisation. Man needs both machine and organisation, but they must be mastered and humanised by him instead of his being mechanised and dehumanised by them. "Man's real danger", he warned us, "lies not in the risk of our material security but in the obscuration of man himself in the human world."

Unlike many modern thinkers, Tagore had no blue-print for the world's salvation. He believed in no particularism. He merely emphasised certain basic truths which men may ignore only at their peril. His thought will, therefore, never be out of date. He was what Gandhiji rightly termed the Great Sentinel. As a poet he will always delight, as a singer he will always enchant, as a teacher he will always enlighten. The world has reason to be grateful to one whose genius was so consistently dedicated to the good of humnnity.

We are obsessed with political problems. As a man whose liver is out of order can think of nothing else and believes every quack to be a doctor, so we think of nothing but the disease that is eating into our national life and hang on the words of every politician who has the brazenness to proclaim himself a saviour. Today it is not the priest or the *faqir* who is the supreme parasite, but the politician. The priest promised to take us to heaven, the politician promises to bring heaven to us. Just as obsession with disease by increasing one's dependence on medicine closes up the natural springs of health, so political obsessions by generating popular superstitions about 'isms' shut out those very influences which make for vigour and health of the national mind. In fact, we have become so stupid as to believe like sick men that all our ills would disappear if we pin our faith on prescriptions and formulae.

In national no less than in individual life there are no watertight compartments. No sharp lines can be drawn to mark off the political from the moral, the social from the economic regions of life. Politicians often talk as through one has only to introduce

certain political and economic changes for paradise to descend on earth, forgetful of the fact that the efficiency of an institution depends on the way it is worked, which itself is determined by the character and wisdom of the men who work it. For example, it is not the parliamentary sysmem that guarantees democracy in a State, but certain specific virtues in the citizen, namely, courage to stand up for one's rights, tolerance of opposition, moderation in passion and a sense of humour which refuses to take a politician at his face value. No people who lack these virtues can ever be democratic, whatever their political institutions.

Similarly there is no guarantee that the attainment of political independence and the framing of a Character of Fundamental Rights will automatically secure freedom of the Indian people. In fact, with the withdrawal of foreign authority has come the real test of our fitness for freedom. Hence, Gandhiji's insistence on the constructive aspect of our national struggle, which is a way not only of winning freedom but of keeping it. Hence also Tagore's labours to release the fountain of our creative energy, which never fails to construct even while it destroys. Tagore was not a politician. He was not interested in weilding power over the lives of others, for good or for evil. But he had a clear and steady vision of man's destiny and an unerring instinct for those first principles which if men and nations betray, they perish at the root. How well he summed up in an aphorism the tragedy of power politics ! "The clumsiness of power spoils the key and uses the pickaxe."

ONE WORLD IDEA

Today it is the fashion in Indian politics to be an internationalist. Even politicians who cannot see beyond their noses in their everyday activity talk loudly of one world. We have forgotten that one man who had the vision and the courage to talk of a world which "is not broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls" at a time when he was ridiculed for the very largeness of his sympathies. He went from country to country of Asia and Europe on a forlorn mission preaching the values which could make possible this One World at a time when in the fever of renascent nationalism his words fell like seeds in a desert. With his very limited resources he built up at Santiniketan a centre

of international studies which at that time merely roused the amused contempt of his wise contemporaries. And yet at the first Asian Conference held at New Delhi on the eve of Indian independence, the name of Tagore was not even mentioned. Was it a lapse of historical memory of gratitude ?

28

RABINDRANATH TAGORE AT WORK*

AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY

I came to Rabindranath Tagore when his hair was already silver, more than two decades ago. But I have no recollection that I thought of him as old, or as in any way lacking in youth's vigour and beauty. It was in a room in Ballygunje (in Calcutta), at a distinguished friend's house one evening—it was a literary evening—that I saw him first. Even to my adolescence, his ascetic but glowing countenance, his magnificent physique with its indefinable saintliness, and the warm vitality of his voice and movements conveyed an entirely new and rich concept of youth. I marked his bearing, majestic and spare, and his words carried a spiritual laughter giving to his conversation an iridescent freshness and gravity that I had not imagined possible. What he said I do not remember; indeed, even though I was eager to hear him and also tried desparately to link him up with all the great things which I know he had written and done, my impressions were in a whirl. It was as if I was trying to convince myself of the full reality of a genius, while the mystery that I sought was more than matched by the fact of his presence. All that I could fix upon was that here was a fully human person, not unlike us or superhuman, but rather like what we really were but could not quite become. And I wondered at the strength which he carried so easily in reaching such perfect humanity. He was accessible, as great men are, needing no display of remoteness, and radiantly sane.

*This article is based on a Radio Talk given by the writer at Delhi on March 7, 1951.

That picture yet remains with me, unaltered save perhaps in detail; the picture of a very powerful and a very friendly sort of greatness. He was the symbol of regal and unwaning youth; tall, guiding, and fearless; but he was near to us and gained our hearts by living in a normal world. His delicate austerity carried immense reserves of power which never flaunted itself because it was so finally and creatively adjusted. Gradually I knew of Rabindranath Tagore as a man of extraordinary physical strength, but his strength seemed so natural that we did not think of it. We took it for granted that he passed from one work to the other in the course of a continuous day, with very short breaks; he seemed to be always there, teaching children, composing songs, studying for hours, giving interviews, writing letters with his own hand to numerous people, preparing lectures, meditating over a dictionary, discussing science, taking service at the tree-traceried marble floor of the prayer hall, conducting rehearsals of plays or leading a literary or musical evening for hours. He seemed as busy as the daily sun—his namesake—in a multitudionous life and yet there was a sense of space and tranquillity whenever you came near to him. One saw him hard at work, it was one thing after another from dawn to fairly late in the evening, very often; but activities seemed to flow from him; that is to say, one saw the doing but not great application which sustained the deed.

I have spoken of his many sided creativeness, but let it be remembered that at the heart and centre of it all lay his ceaseless, tireless work as a writer. This was of course his great vocation, and there was no fixed time for him nor the guarantee of any respite. Never did his Muse spare him, and his lyre had to be kept tuned from hour to hour. I can see him at his bare desk, on a hard straight chair; writing continously for the whole morning, and again throughout the day till late in the evening; and again at night. We got so used to his rich and rare industry that we merely wondered at the subject of the essay, and if we knew about the novel, or poem, or drama he was writing we discussed matters connected with the text. He would not stir for hours sometimes; one saw the faint movement of his right shoulder and his alert figure and knew that he was intensely busy. So complete was his absorption that he would not realise our presence even if we came quite close to him and wanted to draw his attention when some urgent consultation was necessary. Frequent interruptions would

often cut through his work,—there would be visitors, or some special engagement, but his attention would not be broken and one would find him writing the next sentence the moment after the intrusion was over. Distractions, perhaps, more affect persons who cannot apply their whole will to any task; Rabindranath, one felt, was completely engaged with his entire self in whatever he did, be it writing or teaching or playing with children--and, therefore, he was never really away from himself and fatigued. Rest for him meant a process of creative activity, with natural pauses needed by the rhythm of mind; change in the nature of work would give him new refreshment, and even artificial breaks partly fulfilled the purpose. But there would be limits, of course, and a resolute newspaperman or tourist has been known to shatter lyrics and the lyrical peace of mind. And it was partly our business to guard him from a variety of unmusical folk though the poet himself, who would allow no barricading, made it difficult for us to protect him. The secret of his power lay also in his faculty of drawing nourishment from chance contacts, and we knew that he wanted to meet the necessary demands of his social and humanitarian self in order to complete his creative task. I have wondered, again and again, whether this is not the finest definition of man's divinity—this great power which is at peace with itself and can, therefore, cary life's duties in the fullest measure, this entering into the wide heart of spiritual earth through beauty and ennobling work and varied companionship.

The myth that Rabindranath was a delicate dreamer protected by intellectuals of his liking, went round in some remote gossiping circles but people who came anywhere near him knew otherwise. Mystic he was, but with eyes wide open, seeking to view the sunlit world; and his dreams, created out of a lifetime of experience gained through travel and concourse with men, led to action and reached prophetic authenticity. In all he did and was, there was this fine balance : the harmony of his life came from hidden resources of strength, both of mind and physique. Rabindranath Tagore belonged to the great tradition of ancients who lived epical lives, engaged in day-to-day activities that change an age and a civilisation. But like those godly men who walked this earth, he lived with ordinary people, seeking no uncommon men or circumstances, but finding the world a marvel and an inspiration simply because he was open to its miracle. He would laugh when we

told him of the false mystical version which associated him with a graciousness which, according to crude men, was not "sufficiently manly." I have referred to his colossal power of work and hard, disciplined vitality. Behind this, he would tell us, lay his early days of Spartan training when he had to get up before dawn, do his exercises, bathe in cold water even in the winter, and then study astronomy and Sanskrit before sunrise. He did not go in for strenuous exercises but led a vigorous open-air life. He had been a fine swimmer, and had often crossed the Ganges; he could walk long miles, even in the mountains. Once he did the whole distance from Bhowali to Kathgodam, in almost record time, not caring to use mules or ponies. His trouble for the greater part of his life was that he did not know what illness was, and that he had never suffered from a headache ! Physical fitness allied to true genius is a spiritual asset, and one saw the effect of this in his daily life. Instances of his power of physical and mental endurance are a legion but I particularly remember the occasion when in trying to close a window during a storm, in the small hours of the night, he had crushed a finger nail between the hinges. He had not wanted to trouble others in the night, and sat on the verandah quietly waiting for the morning. The pain was excruciating and when the doctor came it was found that the entire nail of that finger of the right hand had come out, and that heailing would be a long business. The poet took it easy only complaining that he had not practised writing also with the left hand like Mahatma Gandhi ! Within a day he had resumed writing, in spite of a heavily bandaged and hurting finger, and we have a large number of manuscript, poems and articles written in large letters in a trembling unfamiliar hand.

That fortitude was a thing of beauty, one realised in the presence of Rabindranath; just as one associated feats of mental and physical prowess with his work. I have seen him copy and recopy over a hundred pages of his manuscript, perfecting his writing and preparing the final version. Then, after reading it out to an audience, he had sometimes felt the need of recasting the whole material and done so. The same strength of mind would show itself in details of his daily life. His habit of early rising and meditation remained undefeated by any inclemency of weather or foreign surroundings; he never compromised even when travelling whether on ships or in railway trains; in the bitterly cold dawn in some European hotel he would already be long at work before

most people were ready for the day. During travels one saw his fortitude at every step mainly perhaps because the trials were unusual. When over seventy he not only travelled from Calcutta to Bushire by plane but never allowed us to know what the sudden plunges into air pockets or flying at very high altitudes meant for him. Near Jodhpur, the plane had gone above 20,000 feet to avoid the heat-waves and a brewing sandstorm, but his face was serene. In the day-long motor rides from one Iranian hill-city to another, he hardly seemed to be affected though he suffered much. For any young person, triumphal receptions offered at city-gates at the end of a shattering, dawn-to-dusk journey would be a very mixed blessing, but Rabindranath felt the warmth of welcoming hospitality and in order that there might not be any embarrassment endured solid hours of crowded receptions, met numerous people, and gave speeches before he was able to reach his rooms. And very often the evening banquet came soon after, stretching till late at night to be followed, on occasion, by an early morning journey over long mountain distances. And yet out of it were born lovely lyrics and a vivid book of Iranian travels full of eager observation and neighbourly understanding of a great civilisation. Outer events had not affected the plenitude of his mind.

I mention this to show how prowess in him became a spiritual and an artistic force, using physical energies for the expression of great humanity. One wishes that Rabindranath, the person whom we know, could be revealed to those who have never read him. in Bengali or come near him. The full vitality of his verse, which in the original reflects Rabindranth's power, cannot be felt through translations. The luminous shadow is there in his own English renderings, which are mostly from songs, but the rich and structural poems have not been, and can never be translated.

"Rabindranath as I know him" is the title of my talk but how can I touch upon memories that cannot bear expression ? I could only hold a picture of his unageing godliness of youth which has given to mankind a new wealth of wakefulness. Unlike most great men, Rabindranath spent his young age as a recluse —in remote villages on the river Padma—but as he grew old in years he brought an even more resplendent youth to dwell in the heart of human affairs. His new poems and his social and political statements, given in the last year of his life touched the intimate problems of his countrymen. He came closer to us as the days went by and shared our joys and sorrows to the full. The last

months of his life were offered, in spite of his illness, and perhaps because of his own suffering, to a devoted understanding of the burden borne by multitudes of men and women. He bore his own physical pain with his usual stoicism but the agony of our age was for him an almost unbearable personal affliction. Yet pain he never accepted as a finality; even with darkness closing upon the human scene, in all directions, he saw beyond it and has left with us the victory of life' great renewal.

29

RABINDRANATH : THE WAYFARING POET

SAMAR DUTTA

Perhaps it will not be a mistake to say that Rabindranath Tagore was a wayfaring poet who travelled almost all his life from one end of the world to the other. It is said that the world-tours which he undertook enriched considerably his mental outlook and horizon and at the same time it won for him world-wide reputation unattained by any other poet either in India or abroad. Every time on completion of his tour the poet went on producing his work with fresh energy and new experience to enhance the treasure of Art, Literature, Music and the like. Thus, the poet opened up never and newer vistas of literary creation which give us joy for ever. We find a new inspiration and a dynamic life in his creations and we marvel at his achievements. It is really astonishing how it could be possible within the span of an individual life to offer the world such an inexhaustible treasure of literature and thereby give expression to such creative genius as is beyond any body's imagination.

Rabindranath took interest in travelling from his very boyhood. At the age of eleven he went with his father Maharsi Devendranath Tagore to see the magnificent sights of the Himalays. At the age of seventeen he went to Ahmedabad and stayed there fore some time with his second elder brother Satyendranath Tagore. After a short time he went to England for the first time in 1878 as a student. In England he studied for some time in a school at Brighton. Thereafter he was admitted to London University College. While as this college Rabindranath

was immensely attracted by Henry Morley's mode of teaching and also his profound knowledge of literature. This visit which Rabindranath paid to England at the very beginning of his youth is a memorable event. It enabled him to remove to a great extent the barriers which stood before him in the shape of religious dogma and national parochialism. He was highly impressed by the civil liberty enjoyed by the men and women in England. He was equally impressed by the speeches of the famous leaders like Gladstone and Bright. Not only that. During this tour Rabindranath took some primary lessons in England on European Music, Dance and Fine Arts. The poet wrote about all these things in detail in his 'Jivan Smriti' and 'Europe Prabasir Patra'.

The poet had been to England for the second time in 1890. In his 'Europe Yatrir Diary' he left for us very beautiful descriptions of the natural scenery he witnessed while on journey by sea. He narrated in the same book various characters and psychology of different people with whom he came in close contact. Incidentally it may be mentioned here that a European Government Official made sarcastic remarks on the question of representative Government in this country as claimed by the Indians. Rabindranath resented those remarks and he protested immediately against it. He said straight to the face of that official :

> "The educated people of our country (India) cannot put up with the insult and hatred with which you treat us on and often. Because we have taken that insult deeply to heart we are now trying our best to defend our national prestige. The present misfortune of our country is that those who hate us to the very hilt come forward to do us good by applying force. It is they who do not consider us as human beings who have taken upon themselves the responsibility of introducing law and order for us, imparting education for us and rendering justice on us. Our self-respect sinks to nothing as we are compelled to accept such a position under utter humiliation."

These linese undoubtedly indicate the poet's consciousness as to his national prestige.

Again in 1912 Rabindranath made a voyage to England. The poet had a friend in London named William Rothenstein who was an artist. When the two friends met in London they talked of the work they had been doing. Rothenstein asked Rabindranath

if he had any translation of his work. Rabindranath showed him what he had done. They were the poems which later on formed 'Gitanjali'. Rothenstein was enthusiastic in his admiration for Rabiudranath and eager that Rabindranath's poem should be made known to others. He felt that he had made a great discovery that Rabindranath was not only a poet of India but also a poet of humanity and belonged to the whole world. One of the first people to whom he showed the poems was the Irish poet W.B. Yeats who as once recognised Rabindranath as a great poet. Rothenstein then invited a number of his friends including many well-known English writers, to a meeting at his house. The poet Yeats was there. He read Rabindranath's poems aloud to them. When he finished there was perfect silence. Rabindranath's heart sank; he feared that those English people did not understand or like his work. But soon he found that the silence was not due to any dislike, but quite the opposite. The feelings of admiration and reverence were too deep to be expressed in words or applause. Here are some lines from 'Gitanjali', but the peoms therein should be read in full for their beauty to be properly understood.

"Have you note heard his silent steps ?
He comes, comes, ever comes . . . . . .
In the fragrant days of sunny April through the forest path
He comes, comes, ever comes,
In the rainy gloom of July nights on the thundering chariot of clouds
He comes, comes, ever comes.

In sorrow after sorrow it is his steps that press upon my heart, and it is the golden touch of his feet that makes my joys to shine."

* * *

"Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well.
O thou beautiful, there in the nest it is thy love that enclose the soul with colours and sounds and odours.

But there, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her fiight in, reigns the stainless while radiance. There is no day nor night, nor form nor colour, and never, never a word."

* * *

"Thou art the Brother among my brothers, but I heed them not, I divide not my earnings with them, thus sharing my all with thee.

In pleasure and in pain I stand not by the side of men, and thus, stand by thee. I shrink to give up my life, and thus, do not plunge into the great waters of life."

Before 1912 Rabindranath's name was quite unknown in England. After the meeting in Rothenstein's house he suddenly became famous. The 'Gitanjali' poem were published. Of course there were some people who did not admire them and others who admired them but did not really understand them. But many people did understand them and they felt that Rabindranath had new message to give them and a new vision of truth to show them. They thought of him as not merely a poet but a prophet of God.

In the winter of 1912-13 Rabindranath paid his first visit to the United States of America. There he delivered several lectures at Chicago and Harvard Universities. One lecture was on 'The Ideals of the Ancient Civilisation of India'. He explained how the purpose of Santiniketan School was to revive those ideals of outward simplicity and inward harmony and truth in the modern world.

Another lecture was on "Race Conflict" which was an important subject to the mixed population of the United States especially in the regions where prejudice against the Negro still remained. Rabindranath also realized its great importance in connection with his own country. His lectures at Harvard were afterwards published in a book 'Sadhana'. They decribe in prose the same experiences and beliefs as are recorded in his poetry. From America Rabindranath returned to England and after a short stay there he embarked for India in autumn of 1913.

Rabindranath tourned Western India in 1920. He visited Europe and the United States in 1920-21. In 1922 he visited South India and Ceylon. In 1923 he went to Sind and Kathiawar, Assam and the Western Indian States. In 1924 he visited China and Japan and thereafter South America. He spent a short time in Italy on his way home in January 1925. In 1926 he had been to Italy for a longer visit and then travelled through Switzerland. Norway, Denmark, Germany, Czechoslovakia, the Balkans, Greece and Egypt. In 1927 he visited the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) and Central India for a short time and later travelled in Malay, the Netherlands' East Indies and Thailand. In 1928 he

went once more to South India and Ceylon. In 1929 he went by the Pacific route to Canada and visited Japan and French Indo-China on his return journey. In 1930 he was invited to Baroda; later on he set out again for Europe, visited France, England, Germany, Denmark and Russia and then he went for a short time to the U.S.A. The last time he left India was 1932 when he travelled by Air to Persia as the guest of the Shah and visited Italy on his way back. Never, never have we heard of any poet either in India or elsewhere undertaking such an extensive tour, coming in contact with people of different countries, gathering knowledge about their language, manners, customs and ways of life, save and except Rabindranath.

In Europe in 1920 Rabindranath found many things to make him sad. He was the not popular in England at that time. It was the year after Amritsar shootings. Many English people objected not only to Rabindranath's protest against Amritsar shootings but also to his condemnation of war. Rabindranath visited France while the destruction caused by the war of 1914-19 was still visible. He saw the terrible condition of the ruined villages and farm-lands after four years of fighting; he saw the graves of thousands of young men whose lives had been cut short in the awful slaughter, who might have given so much to the world. War seemed to him to be like a made and terrible demon, greedy for human blood and the enemy of everything that is good, beautiful and true in human life. He did not believe that justice and freedom for which the people fought could be achieved by the method of war.

From France Rabindranath went on to Germany. In 1920 Germany was a defeated country suffering from a terrible famine and struggling in poverty and starvation to pay the enormous fine which had been imposed on her by the victorious Allies. No other country was then willing to be her friend or to help her in difficulties. Rabindranath saw the suffering of ordinary, innocent people and the meek and diseased little children. "Germany needs sympathy", he wrote. He saw that only generosity and forgiveness could overcome the evils left behind by the war. But the people of France and Britain blamed Germany for the war and refused to forgive or to help. If Germany had been helped then she might never have listened to the teachings of the Nazis and the world might have been saved from the horrors of the Second War. But Rabindranath and other generous thinkers spoke in vain.

During this visit to Germany, a little incident happened which touched Rabindranath very much. Two German girls came to see him bringing him flowers. They could not speak much English and he knew no German, but one of them said to him "I love India." "Why do you love India ?" asked the poet. "Because you love God", she replied. When Rabindranath told this story afterwards, he said, "The praise is too high. I wish it were true. The world is waiting for a country that loves God more than herself."

When Rabindranath went to China in 1924 he did not at first find a very warm welcome there. Many of the young Chinese had been educated in America and some in England. They had returned home eager to use their western scientific knowledge in order to help their own country. They had read accounts of Rabindranath which described him as a friend of all the old ways and an enemy of western knowledge and so they were prejudiced against him. But when they heard him speak they soon found that those accounts were untrue. Instead of an enemy of knowledge they found a man who was eager to study truth wherever he found it in east and west, in the past and the present, in science and religion. After this a number of Chinese students became very friendly towards Rabindranath and he had a very happy time in their country. The great Chinese scholars Dr. Hu Jhin and Dr. Lian Chi Chao welcomed him and helped him in every way. From that time onwards the members of Chinese visitors and students at Santiniketan largely increased.

When Rabindranath visited Italy in 1926 he was entertained by the Italian Government. The poet met almost all the great men of that country. He liked the king of Italy and thought him very modest and friendly. He met Mussolini who told him that he had read all the Italian translations of his work and admired them greatly. He also met the great Italian thinker and writer, Benedetto Croce. But he enjoyed most of all his meetings with Italian school children. While he was there the school children of Rome gave their annual concert. The songs were sung by a choir of a thousand children and the music was woderful.

At that time the Facist party under Mussolini was governing Italy. Newspaper reporters often asked Rabindranath what he thought about Fascism. As he did not know any Italian he was very careful in his replies. "I do not know the real thoughts of

the Italian people", he would say, "and I am not qualified to speak about their Government." He did, however, ask the Italian people to remember that to seek for material wealth would never make them great and the real 'world power' are those countries which give the world permanent gifts of the spirit. After the poet left Italy he stayed in Switzerland with some friends who knew Italian. They told him that the Italian newspapers were all saying that he admired and approved of the Fascist Government. Rabindranath was very much shocked and angry at this news. He wrote a letter to an English newspaper 'Manchester Guardian' in which he explained what he had actually said and declared that he always had been and he always would be an enemy of tyranny and injustice in any country in the world. This letter made the Italian newspapers very angry.

Rabindranath's visit to Russia in 1930 was a memorable incident. Every thing that he saw there interested him deeply and he wrote long decriptions of it to his friends in India, which were published as 'Letters From Russia'. He thought that the progress made by the people of the Soviet Republics was almost miraculous. He rejoiced to see all that had been done for the health and welfare of the people within the short space of ten years. He admired the way in which the Russians struggled to give all boys and girls education and equal chance of taking up any work which they were qualified to do. When the time came for him to say farewell to Russia he gave generous praise to the people who had carried through these great reforms, for their great energy and devotion and the wisdom of their policy. Yet there was one thing in Russia which did not please the poet and he thought it his duty as a true friend to speak of that also. This was that no one in Russia who disagreed with communist ideas was allowed to express his opinions freely. Rabindranath was completely opposed to the policy of using force to suppress unpopular political ideas and he begged his Russian friends to beware of the danger. Here are his words :

> "I wish to tell you know how much I admire your energy in spreading education among the massess. You have recognised the truth that to get rid of social evils one has to go to the root, which can only be done through education. I must ask you, are you doing your ideal a service by arousing in the

minds of those under your training anger and class hatred against those not sharing your views ? You are working in a great cause. Therefore, you must be great in your minds—great in your mercy, understanding and your patience."

In this way your wayfaring poet travelled almost over every part of the civilised world carrying the message of India and everywhere he had conquered the hearts of the people. To the peoples of the West, he had been the messenger of the mysterious and mystic East; but that is not all, in his radiant personality and in his works they found a vibrating life wherewith to seek the Bliss of Life, the Harmony of the inner Spirit which the glorious West in spite of its myraid achivements in the domain of Science and Art, had not been able to attain even after a mad pursuit.

30

TAGORE'S THOUGHTS ON MUSIC : DIMENSIONS OF APPRECIATION

SITANSU RAY

Much has been done on Tagore's songs. History and chronology of Tagore's compositions, their theoretical details, uses of *ragas* and *raginis* and other regional tunes, structural peculiarities of all important *talas* to which his songs have been set, the characteristic modes of his tunes, the literary value of the texts of the songs and above all the perfect fusion of tune and texts—these have been the main discourses of the scholars today on Tagore's songs. There is no doubt that songs are the best of Tagore's creations and we have been enjoying them. They will last long as genuine heritage of the cultural life of our country.

In this article, I would like to throw light on a parallel and equally important topic which may be described as Tagore's thoughts on music or Tagore's philosophy of music or more specifically, Tagore as a musicologist. Little work has been done on this. I shall try to be brief and shall use the materials selectively and not extensively.

Visva-Bharati has published Tagore's 'Sangit Chinta', which compiles some articles and lectures on music by Tagore, dialogues between Tagore and Dilip Kumar Ray, Tagore and Rolland, Tagore and Einstein and Tagore and H.G. Wells; and the correspondence between Tagore and Professor Dhurjati Prasad Mukherjee and a few portions from his autobiography and letters. But this compilation does not exhaust Tagore's thoughts on music, much of which lie scattered in his poems, dramas, short stories,

Let us also quote a portion of the seventeenth poem of "Shesh Saptak". The poem was primarily written as a letter to Professor Dhurjati Prasad Mukherjee, a great critic and lover of Music.

> When the human feeling expresses itself through the medium of musical tune, it takes the dynamic and cosmic 'tunefulness' of this universe into a desired shape, adds style to it and makes to move in a peculiar way. That limit-bound dynamism takes the form of the art of music.

When Tagore went to Rolland's at Villeneuve on the 24th June, 1926, music was one of the topics of their discussions. Tagore said—

> "The purpose of art is not to give expression to emotion but to use it for the creation of significant form . . . .In European music I find, however, that an attempt is sometimes made to give expression to particular emotions. Is this desirable? Should not music also use emotion as material only, and not an end in itself?" Romain Rolland answered—
> "A great musician must always use emotion as substance cut of which beautiful forms are created. But in Europe musicians have had such an abundance of good material that they tended to over-emphasise the emotional aspects. A great musician must have poise, for without it his work perishes."

From the above dialogue it is clearly understood that both Tagore and Rolland thought that emotion has no direct role in music but it has a very subtle contribution to the creation of significant form in the art of music.

We don't know whether Tagore read "A New Aesthetic of Music" by Ferrucio Busoni, the famous German aesthete. But we find a close similarity of Tagore's understanding with that of Busoni. Let us quote from Busoni—

> "Music was born free; and to win freedom is its destiny. It will become the most complete of all reflexes of Nature by reason of its untrammelled immateriality. Even the poetic word ranks lower in point of incorporealness".

Later on he adds more—

> ". . . For our whole system of tone, key, and tonality, taken in its entirety, is only a part of a fraction of one deffracted ray from that Sun, "Music," in the empyrean of the "eternal harmony".

Nietzsche's appreciation of music is found in his book "Beyond the Good and the bad" (Jenseits von Gut und Bose), where he says —

> "I could imagine a music whose rarest charm should consist in its complete divorce from the Good and Bad; . . ."

So we see that in point of incorporealness of the art of Music Tagore, Busoni and Nietzsche thought alike.

Now let us watch the next step of music appreciation by Tagore. Having been invited by Sangit Sangha Tagore wrote and read an essay entitled "Sangiter Mukti", i.e., freedom of music at the Rammohan Library, Calcutta under the Presidentship of Sir Ashutosh Choudhury in 1917. In this essay Tagore disussed both Indian and European music. Tagore said that in the domain of the art of music the performer is the *via* media between the composer and the listener. The performer, in accordance with his talent and culture may stand as a barrier of mountain or can play the role of the Suez Canal. In European music, the performer has little scope of improvisation. But in Indian music the performer has a creative role. The cause of decay of Indian music lies in the fact that ungifted and unmusical Ustads show their artisanship and skill of tune and rhythm neglecting the essence of the beauty of music inherited from the great composers like Tansen.

In July, 1921 Tagore delivered a lecture on Indian music, in the annual function of Sangit Sangha. In this lecture he synthesizes the two extreme opinions in the philosophy of music, this first treating music as a language of emotions and the second preaching the unspeakable immateriality of music. He now says that music has two ways of expression, the first being absolute or pure music and the second, the song-form of music which is closely associated with a perfect blending of lyric and its tune and rhythm. Tagore places the first form in the up-country or the

north-western part of India and the second form in Bengal. He refers to the *kirtan* style of music prevailing in Bengal, in which the words play a vital role. His own compositions are the best examples of this blending of lyric and the rhythmic tune. Once Dilip Kumar Ray asked Tagore for freedom of variation from the rigid structure of 'Tagore—songs' as regards their tune. But Tagore did not agree with the proposal pointing to the inalienability of the total forms of his musical creations. He may sanction freedom of interpretation by means of a little improvization to only a very few gifted performers, but not to all.

Tagore's view regarding the appeal of music was that the form of a particular style of music may be regional but the inner appeal of any good music appreciation. A music-lover can react to music without being at home in the verbal structure. Moreover, the art-effect of a successful musical performance transcends the style of rendering it. In course of a discussion with Rolland, Tagore said,—

> "The starting point of all arts, poetry, painting or music, is the breath, the rhythm which is inherent in the human body and which is the same everywhere, and is, therefore, universal. I believe, musicians must often be inspired by the rhythm of the circulation of blood and breath. A very interesting study would be a comparison of four tunes of different countries. With more developed music things become more complex, and the underlying similarities cannot be systematically traced"

Folk music of different countries have some sort of subtle similarities, but classical music of different countries have been developed in different ways. Yet, it was the challenge of the aspect of the university of music that led Tagore to lay the foundation of research work and comparative study of music of different countries for musicians and musicologists. Dilip Kumar Ray also discussed the regionality and universality of music with Tagore. He was searching for the absolute value of art. Tagore told him that the absolute value can be determined or judged only in course of the passing tides of time. The superfluous may decay but the essential will remain.

Tagore and H.G. Wells had an illuminating conversation on

this point in June, 1930 in Geneva. H.G. Wells believed that "Music is of all things in the world the most international". Both of them thought that one shall be able to appreciate the music of an other country by the process of closer acquaintance with them. Radio links the world together. Wells expected further scientific inventions for communication of musical ideas.

Though Albert Einstein was a scientist, he was a keen lover and critic of music, too. In August, 1930 Tagore and Einstein had an exchange of thoughts and ideas about music. Einstein learnt many thing about Indian music from Tagore. Tagore explains to him,—

> "There is in human affairs an element of elasticity also—some freedom within a small range, which is for the expression of our personality. It is like the musical system in India, which is not so rigidly fixed as in the western music. Our composers give a certain definite outline, a system of melody and rhythmic arrangement, and within a certain limit the player can improvise upon it. He must be one with the law of that particular melody, and then he can give spontaneous expression to his musical feeling within the prescribed regulation. We praise the composer for his genius in creating a foundation along with a super-structure of melodies, but we expect from the player his own skill in the creation of variations of melodic flourish and ornamentation. In creation we follow the central law of existence, but, if we do not cut ourselves adrift from it, we can have sufficient freedom within the limits of our personality for the fullest self expression."

Tagore's personality was absorbed in music and that is why, he compares human life to music. Ample examples can be sought out from his literature.

In the short story Chorai Dhan in Gopla Guchchha Tagore draws an analogy of music while depicting conjugal life.

> Marriage is like a large form of programme—music of the whole life. Its burden remains the same, but the improvization of music extends to newer stages day by day. I have comprehended this from Sunetra. She has an unending

wealth of love. The Ragini Sahana is being played all day long in her being.

Tagore compares a deep and passionate human love with the serene joy of listening to good music. In the drama 'Raja' the queen Sudarshana tells the king.

> Speak on, speak on in this way. Your utterances seem to me like muisc, music floating down through ages, as if I have been hearing it in all my births. Is it you who sang, and did you sing to me ? Or, is she nobler and more beautiful than I am, whom you sang to ? I can see that perfect beauty in your music. Is it in you, or in me ?

Love is the best wealth of human heart. And, music is the finest of all the branches of fine arts. Many great composers have expressed love through music; but Tagore establishes the identity of love and music. Thus, he opens a novel dimension of music—appreciation. This is certainly a great contribution to the aesthetics of music.

Another important aspect of music is associated with nature. Tagore, a lover of nature gets inspiration from her while composing music. He enjoys the murmuring brook, the roar of the ocean, the sound of the wind and the whistling of the bird. But he feels that the so-called music of nature is an end in itself, but man has a creative faculty. So, real music is made by man and made for man. In the poem number twenty-eight of *Balaka*, Tagore says—

> You have given song to the bird, and the bird stngs; it yields nothing more. You have given me voice, and I yield more than that; I perform music.

It will not be out of place to mention Eduard Hanslick's views on this particular point of music and nature. He inveighed against the fancies and fantasies of the prejudiced school of music. In spite of some exaggeration, Hanslick's words are to be estimated to realize the real beautiful in music. He was of the opinion that nature is destitute of music. Here is a quotation from the English translation of his book :

"Even the purest phenomenon in the natural world of sound — the song of birds-has no relation to music, as it cannot be reduced to our scale".

Regarding natural gift of human voice Hanslick says,

"Nature has given man but the organs and the inclination to sing, together with the faculty to create a musical system having its roots in the most simple relations of sound."

It is true that man produces music cut of his own fertile imagination, he creates from within. But Tagore is not likely to hold such an extreme view as Hanslick does. He will never say that nature is destitute of music.

Another important aspect of Tagore's thoughts on music is concerned with the communication process, that is to say, the relationship between the artiste and the listener. In the chapter called *Sri Bilas* of the novel Chaturanga we can find out a fine depiction of this relationship. The performer creates form out of joy inside him or her, and the listener derives joy inside him or her, and the listener derives joy out of the said form. This particular thought on music is expressed in course of a discussion about theosophy. Let us come to the specific situation of the novel. It is Tagore's philosophy, expressed in the version of Sachish :

Sachish carried on. He loves form, and so He always comes down to form. But we cannot live with form alone, and that is why, we have to rush towards the formless. He is free, so His play is in bondage; we are confined, and so, our joy is in freedom.

Again Sachish added—

Sachish said, Damini, don't you understand ? He who sings goes from joy to Ragini, and he who listens goes from Ragini to joy. One comes from freedom to bondage and the other goes from bondage to freedom. Thus the two meet together. He is singing on and we are listening to. He composes and makes us listen to, we unfold the form while listening to it.

So, we find that in the perspective of his theological belief of form and the Formless. Tagore unfolds the nature of communication between a good artiste and a sensitive listener.

To Tagore, music is more than a form of art. He feels that the whole being is imbuted with music. Even in silence he can recollect the enjoyment of a fine piece of music once experienced. Let us conclude with a long quotation from poem number eight of Shesh Lekha, composed in a serene mood in the morning hours of the 25th April, 1941, just a few months before his demise, when he is aware of the fact his days are numbered.

> In the first year of marriage the flute was played in Shahana in all directions, rlpples of joyful laughter arose. But today the morning is smiling in mystic silence. The flute is being played in the deep tune of Kanada with the beckoning of the Saptarshis in penance. Five years' pleasant dream of gleaming joy had brought the heaven of fullness in this world. The Raga Basanta Pancham was played in the beginning, it is at its extreme height, rich with all tune and rhythm. With every step on the flowery bed of woods the anklet in jingling in the Raga Basanta.

The depth of Tagore's verbal expression shows the intensity of his feeling. Musical sensitivity becomes the terms of expression of the experiences of life for he had felt the identity of the two.

31

SRI RAVINDRA DIGVIJAYAM*

SUBRAMANYA BHARATI

Kings are honoured only in their own land;
The learned receive homage wherever they go.'

Ah ! What is the use of mere fame ? Why, one of my friends has got fame even now in a particular party set-up.

Tomorrow that party may go up in smoke. That mass of partymen may vanish. That sort of fame would become 'a lie, an old tale, a formless dream'.

If one longs to attain fame, it should rather be like that of Mohan Ravindrar. Is that comfined to Bengal alone ? Or only to the whole of India ? Or to all Asia ? This fame of his is spread in all the wide, wide world—in Germany, Austria, France and so on. Yet his songs are only in Bengali. The world has seen only translations. But these traslations have gained such widespread fame.

Some days ago his 60th birthday was celebrated in-Germany. Some leading citizens formed themselves into a committee under the Presidentship of Bernstoff and presented to Tagore a costly collection of book containing some modern German epics and also critical works and scholarly studies.

Today Germany is the knowledge-capital of Europe. The homage offered to Ravindra the new king (Navindra) in Germany does not exactly belong to him. It belongs to the lotus-like feet of Bharata Mata. It is needless to say that other European countries would have followed Germany's example in paying

*Translated from the original in Tamil by Prema Nandakumar.

homage to the poet. We shall enumerate certain instances of such spontaneous homage.

On 21st May 1921, in *Hamburg Kerr Geitung* a friend has written as follows ; 'As soon as Sri Rabindranath Tagore entered the hall, we felt that a power beyond our mental reckoning had entered our being. It was clear that in his life not a moment was spent by this man when he was not united with the Supreme. His opening words were full of surprises. His first sentence was that the greatest news of this century was the meeting of the East and West. Rabindranath did not deny that Asia had many truths to learn from Europe and had to receive much strength from there. In his speech in the West Rabindranath has repeated this point many times. After returning to India he has stressed the same point in his writings to the great joy of the Anglo-Indian press. But this is not his most important advice. His idea is that there are more things that Europe can learn from Asia. World Wars cannot cease unless Europe and Asia come together. No world peace is possible unless Europe and Asia bind themselves by the strong hoops of equality, friendship and love. As long as there is no peace in this world and men kill each other like animals, civilisation will not grow. This great Tagore, by revealing many new truths and laws for unifying Asia and Europe has made the world indebted to him. Realising this fully, Germany is honouring Rabindranath today and is paying him its grateful homage.'

The honours done to the king of poets from India, Ravindrar, in Austria defy description. The Vienna correspondent of the London *Observer* remarks as follows on 26th June, 1921 : 'No other poet or statesman or general or king was given this united reception brimming with praise and love such as was accorded to Rabindranath by the Viennese citizens and pressmen.' Indeed, this is fame. It was with reference to such phenomena that Tiruvalluvar said long ago : When thou art born, be it so with fame.'

That fame which is extracted to satisfy personal vanity is no fame. Only he who brings fame to his country is really famous. Ravindra has demonstrated to the world that India is the teacher of the world. Honour be to his dear and blessed feet !

In another portion of the aforementioned despatch of the Austrian correspondent the hunger of the European intelligentsia

for the nectarean spiritual knowledge of India is mentioned. 'At no time have we (Europeans) hankered after unity as we do now when we are as scattered children. Yet, though we suffer hell-fires, we haven't given up the hope of a life divine on this earth. At this juncture, Tagore came like a man of God from another planet. Nor were we ever capable of receiving him open arms as we do now. This is made clear by the grand homage paid to him yesterday.'

Now, before we speak of the homage rendered to him in places like France, we shall try to see how Ravindra was able to point out India as the world's spiritual teacher ;

That is an ancient Vedic truth; to him who sees everything as That, where is the confusion ? Where is sorrow for him then ? He who sees all as equal is not repelled or angered or frightened by any thing. He exhibits love, help, contentment and devotion towards all. He who is satisfied by everything remains a satisfied person always. It is this condition of unchanging happiness that is described as the condition of Mukti of Eternal State. Man can reach this state by personal endeavour and faith. That is the secret of the Veda.

It is because he enunciated in clear terms to Europe this great truth of soul-involvement in the Supreme, that Europe paid this wonderful homage to Kavi Chakravarthi Ravindra Nath Tagore.

32

TAGORE AS EDUCATIONIST, ECONOMIC THINKER, AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER**

HUMAYUN KABIR*

I am very Grateful to you, Mr. Prime Minister, for your hospitality, for your kind words of welcome, and I wish to congratulate Mr. Wilmot Perera and his colleagues for the idea which moved them 25 years ago in establishing Sri Palce Institute, not only as another link in the friendship between India and Ceylon, not only as another visible symbol of the great impact of our national poet, Rabindranath Tagore, on the people of Ceylon, and indeed of Asia, but even more because it embodies those of Tagore which are necessary in the modern world, if people in different parts of the world with different traditions, different cultures, different histories and different outlooks are to live at peace with one another. And I think, Sir, it is a most welcome sign that you have here sought to re-create the educational,

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**The above is a speech delivered by Prof. Kabir as chief guest at the Silver Jubilee celebration of the Sri Palce Institute of Ceylon. It will be interesting to note that Sri Palce, an educational institution modelled on Santiniketan, was founded by Mr. Wilmot A. Perera who was an ardent admirer of Poet Tagore. The foundation stone was laid by Rabindranath himself during his Ceylon tour in 1934. The Silver Jubilee function in 1959 was presided over by the late Mr. Bandaranaika who was then Prime Minister of Ceylon.

political and moral ideals of Tagore. It is also a happy augury that this Institute was founded on the birthday of Tagore, and today you celebrate its silver jubilee anniversary on another birthday of Tagore.

On this occasion I feel I could not do better than to try to refer to some aspects of the life and teachings of Tagore not as a poet, nor as a literary man, nor as a musician, nor as a painter, not even as one of the foremost literary figures of the world, though he was every one of them. Perhaps, as a lyric poet he has no equal in the world. Perhaps, as a poet he has few equals. As a short story writer he is perhaps among the greatest that the world has known. As a musician, as a painter,—and he started exploring the possibilities of painting when he was well over 60—in all these different fields he has left his stamp, he has left the mark of his achievements and enriched the cultural heritage not only of India, not only of Asia, but of the entire world.

But today, Mr. Prime Minister, I would like to speak not of any of these aspects of Tagore, but of Tagore the man who helped to shape our educational ideals, Tagore who helped to shape our economic ideals and principles and programmes, Tagore who helped to conceive our politics in that generous and cosmopolitan and humanitarian way, which we believe is the basis of the political attitudes and political programme of our country. I, therefore, wish to speak today, Mr. Prime Minister, of Tagore the educationist, Tagore the economic thinker, and Tagore the political philosopher.

I thank I shall start with Tagore the educationist because this is an educational institution—an educational institution founded according to the ideals of Tagore—but even more because Tagore believed and I am sure every one here believes with him that education is the foundation of Society; the teachers of today are the arbiters of the destiny of society of tomorrow and the day after. How men are trained, what are the ideals the imbibe; what is the type of character that is developed; what is the kind of knowledge that is imparted to them; what are the disciplines through which they go; what is the way in which their mind is formed—these are the things which are going to shape the destinies of the countries of the world and their interrelations with one another. And at the very outset I must say that Tagore's ideals of education

marked in some ways a revolutionary change from the past, a revolutionary change and yet with a continuity of tradition. Tagore was one of those wise men who belived that revolutions are successful only if they are continuations of the past. A revolution which seeks to break away completely from one's past, any revolutions which denies tradition, ultimately defeats itself. And revolutions are successful when all the values of the past are re-discored, are taken up and are re-shaped according to the needs of changing times, or reformed to meet the demands of the new age. And Tagore was in that sense essentially an educational revolutionary.

Tagore believed that education must develop the personality of the child in the context of nature and allow the child to develop in tune with it. He wanted to allow the child to imbibe the beauties of nature, to allow the expanse of the sky, the quietness of the evening and the promise of the morning, the scintillating beauty of the stars and the radiance of the sun when it rises, to permeate the personality of the child; so that gradually these things became a part of his being, and there was harmony in his inner nature as there is harmony in the world outside. Tagore knew that there are clashes and conflicts in the world outside but he also knew that these clashes and conflicts are always finally overcome, and these is a large harmony in which the smaller clashes and conflicts always find their place. And, therefore, he thought that the intellect should be developed, the emotions should be developed, volition and will-power should be developed, and all these should be done through activity of many kinds. Tagore did not believe in any narrow educational ideals. He did not think that only art makes a proper education. He did not think that only Mathematics would give a proper education. He did not think that only Science would give a proper education. But he believed and he tried to carry out his belief in his school which he started in 1901 that all these different aspects of the child's personality must develop harmoniously. He was one of the earliest educational thinkers in recent times who emphasised activity as an essential principle of education. In many ways these ideals have been shared by people in Western countries as well. But Tagore's special countribution was the emphasis on harmony, the emphasis on balance, the emphasis on all-sided development of personality so that no one aspect was submerged,

no one aspect was sacrificed to develop any other aspect. For him beauty must be moral, and morality must be imbibed with the spirit of beauty, and in this way, truth, beauty and goodness—these were three values which he sought to fuse in this educational ideals.

Tagore believed that in every one of us there is the seed of divinity, in every one of us there is the potentiality of greatness, in every one of us there is the promise of great achievement. It is only because we do not pay attention to our potentialities, only because we allow our personality to be warped by considerations of lesser importance, that the human being does not flourish. Given the proper conditions, every human being may not become a Socrates, may not become an Aristotle, may not become a Rabindranath Tagore, but can certainly become a useful, creative constructive member of the community, a citizen of whom any country could be proud.

Mr. Prime Minister, these educational ideals which Tagore preached, the ideal of harmony with nature, the ideal of harmony between the different subjects, the ideal of inner development, the development of all aspects of the personality of the child, with a proper emphasis on the emotions, on intellect, on volition, these are now practically commonplace in the educational parlance of the world. I have sometimes felt that if Tagore had done nothing else but had only formulated his educational ideals, if he had only worked out his educational Philosophy and carried out his ideas in practice, as he did in Santiniketan, we would still have honoured him as perhaps the greatest educational thinker the world has known in the last 100 year. He would have been remembered as an educationist, even if his work as a poet, as a musician, as a literary man had not been there. Tagore always protested and revolted against what we call *Achalayatan*, Achalayatan the building which has become immobile the fortress which cramps the spirit of man, the fortress which becomes a prison, schools which do not allow the free development of the mind. Tagore always protested against rigidity and, therefore, he believed and said that it is only through change, only through a forward march that the values of the spirit can be maintained. To go on repeating any of the old ideals without making the changes demanded by changing times meads to deny those ideals.

Mr. Prime Minister, may I now turn to Tagore's contribution

to our economic life ? One of the things of which modern India is proud, one of the things about which we have great hope—some pride in the achievement that has already been made, and still greater hopes in the promise which they hold—is what we call the community development programme. This programme has become a symbol of hope in the villages. Tagore used to say that one of the misfortunes of the modern age has been that *shree*, grace, beauty has left the villages. The village is berreft of grace, bereft of beauty, bereft of culture. Modern culture has become primarily urban. The very world 'civilisation' shows that it has something to do with cities, and in the modern age this concentration on cities has become even greater than it was in the past. And the result is that throughout the world there has been a drift of the abler men, of the more imaginative men and women, of men and women of will and vision away from rural areas to the towns. And the consequence of that has been that village life has become even more impoverished. There is today a great gap between the town and the village, and in spite of the admonitions of many great men, of Ruskin some 100 years ago, and of Tolstoy, and Mahatma Gandhi, that people should go back to the villages, nobody goes back to the villages. Any bright boy, any bright girl who gets an opportunity of coming from the village to the town likes to stay there.

Tagore realised this and Tagore said that this vicious circle can be broken not by admonition, not by speaking in lyric terms about the beauties of village life, but by transforming the villages, by changing the pattern of rural life, by making the villages more like towns, so that the great gap which exists today between village and town is gradually overcome. People come away from the villages because the villages do not give opportunities of education, do not give opportunities of service, do not give opportunities of self-expression, do not give opportunities of the development of personality. They do not have the health services, the sanitary services, the communications and hundreds of other things which make the town such an attractive place for the young man and woman of today. And Tagore said that this can be changed only if village life is reconstructed, only if educational facilities are there, health services are there, communications are improved, and water supply is provided in an adequate measure.

Only if there are opportunities of service, only if there is opportunity of the fullest expression of personality will men and women stay in the villages. And the programme which we have undertaken today, this community development programme which is being accepted by many other countries of the world, is a direct outcome of this awareness. This programme is of special importance in all the less economically developed countries of Asia and Africa, for it is changing the pattern of rural life by bridging the gap, if not completely bridging the gap, at least minimising the gap, between rural and urban conditions.

It is, I think true to say that after 3,000 years the Indian village is at last on the march. For almost 3,000 years our agriture had hardly changed, our ways of living in the villages had hardly chahged, and the little changes that had taken place were often for the worse. Today conditions of sanitation in rural areas are such that the less I speak about them the better. The condition of village housing is so bad that we are ashamed of it. The condition of planning of roads, of water supply in the villages, is completely inadequate. For over 3,000 years it has continued like that, but in the course of the last ten years—since India become free—a massive effort is being made to change all that and to recapture the old spirit, to bring back conditions where rural sanitation may compare with sanitation in urban areas, to bring water supply to villages where there was no supply before, to transform methods of agriculture, to build new systems of rural economy and rural finance. And all this goes under the name of the community development programme, and that is why it is a programme in which we have so much hope and from which we except so much.

I cannot help pointing out that this is a programme which Tagore set out some 55 years ago. Fifty-five years ago round about Santiniketan where he started his school, he drew up the first comprehensive blueprint of what is called community development programme today. And the work which was started there on a very small scale, round about Santiniketan grew. Later, round about 1917 to 1921, it was developed through the help and cooperation of an enlightened English friend, Elmhirst, who came and gave his energies to it, who dedicated himself to build up Sriniketan. In Sriniketan we had the first complete programme of what is called community development programme in India today.

And Tagore at the time said, in fact still earlier round about 1886 he had said, that there can be no question of economic regeneration of the country, there can be no question of the political freedom of the country, there can be no question of raising the standard of life of the people, there can be no question of building a new humanity in India, unless the conditions were changed in the villages, so that the villages will again become creative, so that the individual finds satisfaction and there is a close interlinking between economic and cultural life, between economic and moral life. Tagore declared in 1886 that political bondage is merely a symptom, and to fight political bondage on a merely political programme, on merely political basis, is a mistake and cannot succeed, but the day individuals develop, the day individuals excel as human beings, human beings with a moral purpose, human beings with aesthetic perceptions, human beings with economic self-sufficiency, human beings with personal dignity, human beings devoted to the ideal of truth and liberty, -when human beings become like that, political bondage will drop like the slough off the snake's back when the winter is past. And Tagore believe that it would be in this way, by our own re-birth, creating ourselves as self-respecting individuals that our political problems would be solved, and in so solving them we shall also serve the world. And this is the economic ideal which is governing India today.

I wish to refer to one other element in this economic ideal of Tagore. Tagore was no obscurantist. He knew that the day of the machine had come. He knew that even though handicrafts had their value, that some of the most beautiful things have been done in the past through sheer mannual labour and manual skill, he knew that in the modern world, if you are to provide the services for millions of human beings, the machine will have to be used. All that Tagore wanted was that the machine must be the slave of man, not his master. And he accepted the machine freely and without any mental reservation whatsoever. The pattern of economic civilisation which we are seeking to develop in India today is in conformity with the ideal of Tagore. It is an economic pattern in which heavy industry will go side by side with consumer industries, a pattern in which there may be certain trades, certain types of industry, certain types of commerce, in which there will be public control and public management, but side by side there will be other spheres of economic activity which will be left to the

initiative and freedom of the individual. This pattern of mixed economy, is something which Tagore thought of some 50 years ago and through his example and intutition stressed so long as he lived.

And now finally, Mr. Prime Minister, I come to his contribution to our political ideals. I think in this the two main elements on which I would like to speak are his impact on our foreign policy and his contribution to the conception of our constitution. I shall take up the question of his impact on our foreign policy first. Our foreign policy, ever since India became free, has been a policy of harmony, has been a policy of friendship, has been a policy of welcome, has been a policy of reconciliation. Not that we have not made mistakes, not that we claim that we have always been right, not that we have not occasionally lapsed from our ideals, but throughout we have endeavoured, with all the power at our command, we have endeavoured with all the earnestness that we have to create friendship with our neighbouring countries, and also countries far away and distant. In this way, India has sought to make a contribution in creating in this world a little more of goodwill, a little more of friendship a little more of harmony than existed before. And this is the ideal which Tagore taught. Tagor was the first great internationalist in India in the modern age. After Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who went out in an early decade of the last century, Tagore was the first great Indian who went out as an ambassador of goodwill. And he came as an ambassador of goodwill here to Ceylon, he went to Malaya, he went to Indonesia, he went to Burma, he went to Indo-China, he went to China, he went to Japan, he went to Europe, he went to North America and he went to South America. In fact it was after many countries that an Indian of his status went out again with the message of goodwill, harmony and friendship. And one special feature in this was that for almost 200 years our eyes have been turned towards the Western world. We looked at all problems through British spectacles. Europe has given us much. Europe brought to India a new scientific outlook, a new scientific temper, and brought about the renaissance which has resulted in Indian freedom. But nevertheless this impact of Europe also restricted us because some of our contacts with our nearest neighbours were lost for a while. We had age-long connections with Afghanistan, with Iran, with Ceylon, with Burma, with Malaya, with Indonesia, with Indo-China, with

China, with Japan, with Arabia, with Egypt, and for about a hundred years our relations were almost in a state of suspense. Tagore was the first great Indian in recent times who revived this contact, and our foreign policy is following it up. We want friendship and collaboration, the closest co-operation with our neighbours to our east and to our west, to our north and to our south.

Before I conclude I would like to refer Tagore's contribution to our constitution. My belief is that this perhaps his richest and deepest contribution to our national and political life. Our constitution is essentially a federal constitution, a federal constitution in which the value of every language is recognised, a federal constitution in which the value of every community is recognised, a federal constitution in which the value of every religion is recognised, a federal, constitution in which every race is honoured. Tagore some sixty years ago, wrote that if God had so wished, he could have made all Indians speak one language. Why India alone ? He could have made the whole world speak one language. But the very fact there are in the world so many different languages, the very fact that in India there are so many different languages, so many different patterns of civilisation, so many different flowerings of culture, suggest that there is a divine purpose in all this diversity, there is a divine purpose in this multifariousness of life through which the individual expresses himself. Tagore said some sixty years ago that the unity of India has been and shall always be a unity in diversity, a unity in which every group will get its place of honour, a unity in which every group will get its place of honour, a unity in which every religion shall get its place of honour, a unity in which every race shall get its place of honour. And Tagore was right, for history also teaches us that wherever there had been this kind of diversity of peoples, there has been a richer culture, and wherever there has been any attempt at regimentation, wherever there has been any at effacing the peculiar personality of any group or any community within a country, the whole country has suffered.

Many of you will remember that at one time France led the whole of Europe in textiles, in technology, in industry, and indeed in many of the arts of peace and war. Why is it that round about the time of Napolean and soon after that France lost the race to England ? At least one of the reasons, I have no doubt in my

mind, was the expulsion of the Huguenots. The Huguenots were a small group, a very small group in France, but when they were driven out they took with them their special skills, their special methods of treating wool, their special ways of manufacturing textiles, their special ways of trade, their special ways of commerce. And the result was that was England's gain was France's loss.

Take again the example of Spain, Spain which was the pride of Europe round about the middle ages and at the beginning of the renaissance. But when the Spaniards, again through a short-sighted policy, tried to supress one of the vital elements in their national life, the contribution of the Arabs, and they tried to expel the Arabs from Spain, there again the same kind of phenomenon occurred. Within a 100 years or 150 years, Spain fell behind and even today, instead of being in the vanguard of the nations of the world, Spain lags behind. Take Hitler's Germany—if the Jews had not been expelled from Germany, it is very likely that the scientific contribution they had made, the contribution to trade and industry that they had made, might have completely tranformed they history of Europe during the last 25 or 30 years. And it might have been a much more peaceful history, it might have been a much more glorious history, it might have been a history in which everybody would have gained and nobody would have lost.

Tagore realised this truth sixty years ago. Tagore realised it out of the lessons of Indian history, and that is why we find embodied in our constitution today equal right for everyone. We have minorities which number only about a hundred thousand—only a hundred thousand in a population of four hundred million, and I am proud to say, that these hundred thousand have produced some of our greatest men, these hundred thousand have given us great scientists, these hundred thousand have given us great industrialists, they have given us our first member of the Royal Society; they gave us one on the first and one of the greatest Presidents of the Indian National Congress. They gave us one of the greatest industrialists, one may indeed say, the greatest industrialist that India has known. And it is only a hundred thousand. We may go to other countries. We find that throughout the world, wherever this principle of federalism, this principle of respect for the dignity of groups and individuals, however weak, however, small and however, insignificant they may be, wherever

this principle has been recognised, the result has been an immense gain for all concerned. And wherever this principle has been violated, the losses have been not only of the minority—in fact the minority have always lost less than the majority. And in the end the majority has learnt through bitter experience, through tears and toil and suffering for centuries that it does not do to have his disregard for human personality. And that is the lesson which Tagore taught to India in recent times, and that is the lesson which we have put in our contitution. That is the principle, the basic principle of our constitution—equal regard for all, individuals, groups, communities, races, religions, equal opportunity for all, justice for all, because it is only on the basis of justice that great countries flourish.

This was Tagore's countribution to the Indian Constitution, and I believe it is Tagore's great contribution to the constitutions of all countries of the world. It is his contribution to the growth of the world outlook of the modern age, an age where great differences have divided great nations, where great and sharp conflicts which sometimes go to the bases of socicty, which sometimes divide people on philosophical, religious and moral bases threaten the future of mankind. And this principle is what we call Panchsila, what we call co-operation, what we call co-existence. It is nothing but another name for this basic principle of federalism, federalism in which there is sufficient recognition of the dignity of every unit and of loyalty to a group and loyalty to the greater ideals of society.

Another, and in many ways in equally great gift of Tagore is our National Anthem. Of the many things of which India can be proud about Tagore, I believe this is in essence the richest. Every country is proud of its national anthem, and rightly so. Our national anthem, is not a national anthem for India alone, but a religious hymn for all mankind. It starts with *Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka*, an invocation to the Lord of the heart of all the peoples of the world, not the people of India alone. It seeks welfare not for India alone, but welfare for east and west, welfare for north and south. It acclaims the Lord of the heart of the peoples of the world, as the arbiter of India's destiny. And this song reflects the ideal of Tagore, the ideal of Tagore in politics, where there shall be 'live and let live', where there shall be friendship and co-operation, where there shall be mutual regard and respect, where there shall be endeavour and co-operative

construction for building a world where every single individual, whether he lives in Europe or America, whether he lives in Asia or Africa, everyone will be guaranteed the dignity of a man, the rights of a civilised man to live in a civilised world. This is Tagore's message.

And I believe, Sir, you have done well in establishing this institution under his inspiration, in the light of his spirit. I have no doubt that with the devoted band of workers which you have, and with Prime Minister who has accepted these ideals, you will in this country make Tagore as much yours as he is ours; so that men will foreget that Tagore belongs to any particular part of the the world. Let Tagore belong to the whole world, as he rightly did.

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TAGORE, THE EDUCATOR

BHUPENDRA NATH SARKAR

Poets have been compared to birds of paradise, which were long believed to have no feet, and the average man thinks that whereas they have no feet, it shall be forbidden them under the strictest pains and penalties to alight and walk. Their function is to beautify the landscape with the flash of wings. Poet Tagore has nevertheless alighted and walked on grounds of forbidden lands. He was not satisfied with the educational structure of his own country; the bitter memories of his school days made him rebel against it : and he has volunteered to play the architect. The new structure that he has raised will stand as an enduring monument to Tagore's genius as an educationist and will serve as a beacon light to many groping in the dark to find some new avenues in the field of education. To Viswabharati the seer has given his best, for to quote his own words, "Viswabharati is like a vessel which is carrying the cargo of my life's best treasure."

In the *Asrama* School that he set up the child was to come to its own. "With children," says Tagore, "every new fact or event comes to a mind that is always open with an abundant hospitality, and through this exuberant indiscriminate acceptance they learn innumerable facts within a very short time amazingly compared with our own slowness." He believes that children should be surrounded with the things of nature which have their own educational value. Their mind should be allowed to stumble on and be surprised at everything that happens in the life of today. The new tomorrow will stimulate their attention with new facts of life. This

is the best method for the child. But what happens in a school is that every day at the same hour, the same book is brought and the same lessons poured out for him. His attention is never hit by chance surprises in his educational journey. Their introduction to the vast world of miscellanies has become easy and joyful because of the extraordinary receptivity of their subconscious mind. But it is just at this critical period that the child's life is brought into the education factory lifeless, colourless, dissociated from the context of the universe, within bare white walls.

The force called discipline kills the sensitiveness of the child's mind, the mind which is always on the alert, like dead specimens of some museum while lessons are pelted at them from on high. We insist upon forced mental feeding, says Tagore, and our lessons become a force of torture. This is one of man's most cruel, most wasteful mistakes.

Life, to be life at all, has to be lived : and the parents' or teachers' sins of repression and definition, of rod and iron bound rule are visited upon the children and may blast the future of those who are potentially great.

The poet drew his inspiration from the *tapoban* (hermitage) of ancient India. He believes it to be imperative that all important educational institutions should be founded in those places where nature reveals her eternal majesty of beauty and grandeur. With him the atmosphere—the environment—has been more important than rules and methods, buildings, appliances and all the paraphernalia of education. "For our perfection," says he, "we have to be vitally savage and mentally civilised; we should have the gift to be natural with nature and human with human society." In his opinion, teachers should be ideal comrades of those whom they teach and through the course of teaching their own minds should be stirred in sympathy with the stirrings of the young minds. The joy of imbibing lessons oneself ought to find its true expression in infusing it in others. That education is a living, not a mechanical process is a truth as freely admitted as it is persistently ignored. Questions of method and equipment may await opportunities, but the bringing to life must come first. It was so with Thring in England and Padric in Ireland.

True to his ideal, the poet played and sang with his boy and girl companions and acted and danced with them on the stage—a sight for the gods to see. The oriental dances given on the stage

were in tune with the music that accompanied them and were rhythmic in character. All this was to the benefit of the body and the soul. This puts us in mind of the Eurythmy that Dr. Steiner introduced into his anthroposophical School at Stuttgart. If Tagore's is musical education, says Yone Noguchi, it means the development of human minds in the most natural way. The Renaissance in West Bengal, especially in regard to music and fine arts, owes much to Tagore. Tagore's work realises that man does not live by bread alone. Education, we must remember, must move on all fronts and improve all sides of life. He aims at educating the whole man.

Paramhansa Yogananda, an educationist and a Yogi of international renown, thus, speaks of Tagore in his inimitable language: "It was indeed a charming spectacle in the evening to see the poet seated with a group in the patio. Time unfolded backward : The scene before me was like that of an ancient hermitage—the joyous singer, enriched by his devotees, all aureoled in divine love. Tagore knitted each tie wite the cords of harmony. Never assertive, he drew and captured the heart by an irresistible magnetism. Rare blossom of poesy blooming in the garden of the Lord, attracting others by a natural fragnance."

In his advocacy of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction Tagore ranks with a host of educators like Ratichius, Comenius, Port Royalists and Pira Girard. He says that the mother tongue is for students what mother's milk is for infants; this is what mother's milk is for infants; this is what he then averred and later repeated. But "if the give-and-take between within and without has to be done through a foreign language, it becomes like trying to act a play with a mask over one's face."

Tagore has trusted to the presence of the spirit of freedom in the atmosphere. "Education", according to him, "has for its object freedom—freedom of intellect, freedom of sympathy, freedom in the material universe througn our truthful dealings with her universal laws, freedom in the society through our maintaining of truth and love in all human relationships. It is a most difficult ideal and that immense difficulty only proves the majesty of the human soul and the magnificence of our true civilisation." At Santiniketan the studies of the children, though strenuous, are not a task, being permeated by a holiday spirit which takes shape in activities in their kitchen, their vegetable garden, their weaving,

their work of small repairs. It is because their classwork has not been wrenched away and walled in from their normal vocation, because it has been made a part of their daily current of life that it easily carriers itself by its own onward flow. Team spirit is developed by group work, such as scouting, social service, work for the co-operative stores, games, excursions and the like.

Tagore in a mood of despair says that educationists must remain more or less hopeless in an age when collective greed is glorified as patriotism and inhuman butchery is made the measure of heroism. The educated, however, will have to play a new role in the international sphere, because most problems have become international problems and yet the international mind has not been formed, the modern teachers' conscience not having taken up its responsibility in helping to invoke it. John Dewey in his *Education and Democracy* voices the same sentiment when he says,—"The emphasis must be put upon whatever binds people together in co-operative human pursuits and results, apart from geographical limitations. The secondary and provisional character of national sovereignty in respect to the fuller, freer and more fruitful association and intercourse of all human beings with one another must be instilled as a working disposition of mind. This conclusion is bound up with the very idea of education as a feeling of individual capacity in a progressive growth directed to social aims."

Tagore's institution is a synthesis of the old *asrama* ideal of India and the modern ideal of education.

Tagore is, above all, a cosmopolitan and a pacifist. "We individuals," says he, "however small may be our power, have the claim upon us to add to the consciousness that comprehends all humanity". "To a world living under the law of fear Tagore"—to quote Helen Keller—"is a prophet of the Law of Love."

Sir Stafford Cripps' estimate of Tagore is worth quoting: "Tagore seemed to have accumulated during his long life all the wisdom, human kindness and understanding of the world and to have transmuted in the passage through his own mind into hope and inspiration for the future of the human race."

To a free India Tagore is a revivalist and a fore-runner; and to the West, Tagore is India, bringing to Europe not the cross but the lotus.

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THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF TAGORE

SUNIL CHANDRA SARKAR*

In spite of his frequent disclaimers, Tagore did have a philosophy—not indeed one constructed by the intellect but one that spontaneously emerged throughout a long life of varied original experiences. It was not his way to build a general structure and pattern first and supply the details later. His apparently casual and disconnected ideas and intuitions expressed various contexts over a long period of literary activity reveal an inner connction and continuity and easily take their place in a general scheme. These he took pains to knit together towards the end of his life in his Hibbert lectures, though such formal and systematic treatment of ideas was always repugnant of his nature. *The Religion of Man* which incorporates these lectures, may be said to contain a final summing up by him of his philosophical position. Whatever be the value of this philosophy, it is easy to see from this book that here is no question of a thinker trying to live up to his philosophy. It is rather a philosophy trying to arrange and shape itself in consonance with and as a faithful interpretation of a magnificent life richly, integrally lived.

And as is to be expected of a man who evolves his philosophy out of his life-experience, Tagore had only one all-embracing vision of things, one inclusive philosophy which he could and did

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apply without alteration or restriction to all aspects of human life and activity. Therefore. to state his general philosophy is also to state his philosophy of Education.

Failure to see this identity has certainly stood in the way of a wider recognition and a more proper appraisal of Tagor's educational views. Even those interested in Tagore's contribution have so long mainly fined their attention on his educational writings and as a result have carried away impressions and insights which however, have refused to yield anything like a whole view, a self-consistent and well-defined philosophy that can stand comparison with the western philosophies of education. Tagore's educational writings are far from meagre in quantity but they are mostly of an occasional character and the full extent of their meaning, even at the time of their composition and first public utterance, depended greatly on the light shed on them by the entire background of Tagore's life and work.

THE CONCEPT OF THE UNIVERSAL MAN

Poignant in his appeal, subtly suggestive in his analogies and metaphorical expressions, incisive in his frequent flashes of intuitive vision—such is Tagore even in his most purposive and prosaic writings. He has no clear-cut definitions to offer, no precise and measured logical statements or cogent, coherent summpries to gladden the heart of the scholastic enquirer. In presenting his philosophy, therefore, one has to make an independent effort at gathering and knitting together scattered thoughts and setting out the whole thing in a simple, precise language utilising as far as possible Tagore's own phrases. Quoted passages may then serve the purpose of a kind of check and warranty to show that the exposition has at no point gone off the rails. An attempt along these lines has been made below.

Education, according to Tagore, is the all-round growth and development of the individual in harmony with the Universal, the Supreme Person who has in himself the various levels or planes of consciousness and experience corresponding to man's physical self, life, mind and soul. This Universal Man holds within himself all that Man has been, is and will be in future. He is not absolute in the sense of being the last unalterable consummation, the immutably Perfect. He is perfect because he unifies in one

grand harmony the endless variations of individual attitudes, fractional experiences, relative truths. But he himself is a dynamic power, a universal soul, mind, life and self creating out of itself an endless series of evolving phenomena. The evolution of man can be fully understood only when it is seen against the vast background of its original plan which the Universal Mar unfolds within himself. Man may choose to live entirely cut off or estranged in varying measures from this supreme source of his power, this basic structure of his inmost being. In that case, he remains a passive, unconscious instrument of the forces of evolution. Or he may choose to become a conscious agent and determine-actively and wisely his own growth by being in rapport with the purpose of the Universal. One is educated to the extent one is capable of this rapport, this self-identification and co-operation with the bigger reality.

It may be difficult for man readily to accept this nation of a universal Being. But all past labours of man, pleads Tagore, in building up his civilizations, all his efforts at self-improvement and enlargement through education, through cultivation of his various powers, through the establishment of human relationships on sympathy and love—all these unmistakably point at least to a vague subconscious apprehension of this greater reality.

The whole of *The Religion of Man* is one long and many-sided exposition of this notion of the Universal Man. Quoted below from that book are two passages which may indicate the nature of Tagore's concept and its bearing, in his view, on man's education and culture :

> "Whatever name our logic may give to the truth of human unity, the fact can never be ignored that we have our greatest delight when we realize ourselves in others, and this is the definition of love. This love gives us the testimony of the great whole, which is the complete and final truth of man. It offers us the immense field where we can have our release . . ., where the largest wealth of the human soul has been produced through sympathy and co-operation, through disinterested pursuit of knowledge . . .; through a strenuous cultivation of intelligence for service that knows no distinction of colour and clime. The Spirit of Love dwelling in the boundless realm of the surplus, emancipates our consciousness

from the illusory bond of the separatness of self; it is ever to spread its illumination in the human world. This is the spirit of civilization".

Again, "The vision of the Supreme Man is realized by our imagination, but not created by our mind, Mort real than individual men, he surpasses each of us in his permeating personality which is transcendental. The processing of his ideas, following his great purpose, is ever moving across obstructive facts towards the perfected truth. We, the individuals, having our place in his composition, may or may not be in conscious harmony with his purpose, may even put obstacles in his path with his purpose, may even put obstacles in his path bringing down our doom upon ourselves. But we gain our true religion when we consciously co-operate with him . . ."

In his more specific educational writings, these ideas have never received elaborate treatment, but veiled suggestions or even direct references to them are not wanting. And it is particularly interesting to note that one of Tagore's most important educational articles, *A Poet's School*, has been included in *The Religion of Man* as one of its chapters, thus, conclusively showing that Tagore himself looked upon his educational philosophy as an integral part of his general philosophy. The passages below are from *A Poet's School*:

> "The highest education is that," he writes, "which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence". Again, "I had intently wished that the introspective vision of the Universal Soul which an Eastern devotee realises in the solitude of his mind could be united with this spirit of its outward expression in service, the exercise of will in unfolding the wealth of beauty and well-being from its shy obscurity to the light".

TAGORE AND WESTERN UNIVERSALISTS

Before proceeding further it may be useful to look at this concept of a Universal Being a little more closely and bring out whatever is new and distinctive in it in comparison with other similar philosophical notions in the West. This will serve not only to indicate Tagore's position in relation to western philosophers, but also to dispel a possible prejudice in the mind of the

modern reader that all notions of universalism or supernaturalism are bizarre and oriental and entirely out of focus within the perspective of modern thought. On the contrary, it will be seen that Universalism is not at all rare in the West and that the modern world of thought takes its stand on many fundamental principles derived from universalism though it may not have accepted universalism as a whole.

But a terminological difficulty has first to be cleared up. Universal, absolute, supernatural, transcendental—these are words which trend to lose their demarcation and get mixed up, not only in the mind of the lay reader but also in the writings of the most eminent philosophers. The chief difficulty is with the last term Indian philosophical tradition has always characterised the peak of its varied experience and thought in terms of something beyond the phenomenal world, beyond the cosmos and even beyond the other higher worlds. This ultimate, supreme reality, supposed to be free from all multiplicity, attributes and functional movements, can alone, to an Indian mind, be said to represent the transcendental. Barring certain aspects of the Catholic theological doctrine, not a single European philosophy can be said to have had anything to do with the transcendental in this sense. But the term has been applied to Plato's world of essence and archetypal ideas, to the philosophies of Spinoza and Hegel and even to the critiques of Kant who deliberately used that word to mean anything beyond sense-experience. The word 'absolute' also in Indian view, would be a fitting description only of an immobile, immutable truth devoid of name and form and all manner of relations and consequently this also can apply only in respect of the transcendental.

Restricting the meanings of the words transcendental and absolute as above, and leaving them aside as unnecessary for our present purpose, we may say that the Western philosophical systems fall into two major categories : those which believe in universalism in some form and those which take their stand on some kind of relativism and pluralism. The latter are as a rule 'secular' and followers of scientific rationalism in their cosmogony. Among the former some have attempted to place their 'Universal' within the framework of Nature and secular experience, and some have assumed a reality beyond Nature, not indeed something without identifiable traits, but something supernatural in the sense

that it is not capable of being experienced by the ordinary human means of sense-experience and thought. It is notable that in recent times the term supernatural is increasingly being used by Western Philosophical writers to indicate the difference stated above.

In tracing the significance and purpose of the world of appearance to a universal truth, an order of 'supernatural' reality beyond common everyday experience, Tagaore is in the company of and has points of striking resemblance with philosophers like Plato, St Thomas Acquinas, Spinoza, Froeble and Bergson. Particularly close is his kinship with the two last named. When compared with them, the distinctive contribution. of Tagore appears to lie in the totality with which he invests the Universal. The different aspects of the Universal, to each of which he gives due attention and immportance, naturally combine to from an integral whole, a supreme personality. Neither a single aspect nor the entire Being is a mere summation of parts or abstraction or generalisation. The whole as a rule exceeds the mere sum-total in point of depth of significance, degree or order of reality or range of functional potency. It is immanent in the apparent reality as the creative power guiding and impelling all movement, but in itself it maintains a higher reality and is a dynamic self-creating force of Personality acting simultaneously with all its aspects of universal self, life, mind and soul and moving endlessly from prefection to perfection. Once perceived, it throws light on the entire course of evolution in the world, which it reveals to be a continuous progression from matter to life, from life to mind and lastly from mind to soul. And what is more important is that it is capable of being realised by individuals as an added strength, a new impetus acting in this world and accelerating the evolution.

But when we look at the western universalists already named, we find that their dominant interest is in the aspect of mind. Some of them have glimpses of one or two other aspects also, but they have either left them disconnected and separate or attempted a mere intellectual synthesis. And almost always the final drift, the ultimate sense of their thought has been towards the formulation of a Universal Mind. Even when a particular philosopher has taken pains to clothe his Universal with a supernatural potency or the suggestion of some attribute or power other than Reason, the characteristic realism and secularism of the western mind, the aversion of western scholars to all supernatural or supra-rational

realities, have in no time dragged the concept down to earth and pressed it into service after having it divested of all its 'romance', its supernatural afflatus.

Plato saw the Universal as a world of ideas. He also had glimpses of the principles of Beauty and Love. But he did not unify all these principles and depended mainly on the notion of 'Idea's in formulating his philosophy. His 'Idea', frankly a supernatural reality, suffers a sort of deflation at the hands of his own disciple, Aristotle, and becomes Universal Reason, something which is not necessarily supernatural and is within easier reach of the common intellectual man. Again, Aristotle's Reason which has around it an atmosphere of a wider meaning and is associated with an awareness greater than mere rationality gradually slides down to that level after the Renaissance and is now generally understood to be synonymous with rationalism.

Spinoza's philosophy of an immanent universal (God), which he sees both as self-creating Nature, 'Natura naturans' and as a sum-total of "all the mentnlity that is scattered over space and time" contains discreet suggestions regarding certain supra-rational attributes of the Universal, e.g., life, mind, bliss. But it cannot be said that he succeeded in harmonising his diverse elements of experience and presenting a unified whole. His philosophy had also the same fate as Plato's; stripped of its supposed excesses and angularities, it served as the prop and support for modern scientific thought as a veritable metaphysics of science.

More unique and significant in recent history of European thought is the appearance of Bergson and his philosophy of an immanent Universal Life, of the 'elan vital' and its function of emergent self-creative evolution. And here is no mere pale, bloodless speculation, no feat of intellectual synthesis. Bergson 'listens in' on the current of life, feels 'the pulse of its spirit by a sort of spiritual auscultation' as he himself says, and presents a living, throbbing Universal reality more akin to the visions of oriental seers than anythings else in European thought. But with the characteristic western concern for scientific proof, he also takes care to establish his 'intuition' and 'direct perception' on biological data. The western scholar would do well to approach Tagore's Universal through the portals of Bergson's inspiring vision. He would thus get a glimpse of one of the aspects of the Universal as Tagore contemplated it. But even in respect of this aspect, Tagore

has a difference, because his Universal is not merely immanent; it does not act merely by intuition. It also stands outside its creation and acts by wide-awake, conscious thought. Critics have pointed out Bergson's influence on the later poetry of Tagore, particularly in the *Balaka* poems. Bergson's writings indeed may be said to have made Tagore more acutely conscious of the precise nature of his own experience which, however, began long before the publication of *Creative Evolution.* One of his famous earlier poems, *The Awakening of the Spring* written in the eighties of the last century, embodies his earliest and most intense experience of Universal Life. This he himself has pointed out in different places as also in *The Religion of Man.*

FROEBEL AND TAGORE

But for a fuller correspondence with the total structure of Tagore's thought one has to go to one who was primarily a world famous educator and only incidentally a philosopher. The son of a clergyman, he inherited or imbibed certain spiritual sentiments and certain elements of the Catholic doctrine. His position indeed may be said to be that of a revivalist, who adapted and put new life in the Aristotelian-Thomistic solution that had ruled in Europe for centuries as the Catholic philosophy of education. St. Thomas Acquinas had sought to combine with Aristotle's Universal Reason and his theory of 'matter' evolving into 'form' within Nature the supernatural principle of a divine reality. The result was that the two principles seemed to react on and modify each other to some extent but they still remained distinct and did not form one indivisible whole. Froebel seeks to work out this unification and realise this principle of unity equally in all the aspects of existence. His prolonged and intimate contact with Nature which his agricultural training and occupation forced on him, enabled Froebel to connect the spiritual principle he had imbibed and cherished with the glorious visible facts of Nature and Life, to add, in his own words "the Nature-Temple to the church." More by a slow process of labourious contemplation, which indeed characterises all his writings, than by a full continuous vision, Froebel arrives at the view of an eternal unity. "This all-controlling law", he declares, "is necessarily based on an all-pervading, energatic, living, self-conscious, and hence eternal Unity. . . .This Unity is God."

These are words which one might put in Tagore's mouth, only Tagore would not attach so much importance to the abstract notion of eternal unity, the all-controlling law. He would rather mention the joy and beauty in life and Nature, the wonder of creation, the light and peace and poise of a vast consciousness. The difference in breadth, depth and convincing force of reality which one discerns between the achievements of the two great educators is certainly due to the greater compass and power of Tagore's mind and spirit. Otherwise, their starting points as also the paths they follow are remarkably similar in many respects.

The following aim of education as stated by Froebel is not much unlike Tagore's aim quoted earlier—"By education the divine essence of man should be unfolded, brought out, lifted into consciousness, and man himself raised into free, conscious obedience to the divine principle that lives in him and to a free representation of this principle in his life."

The points of agreement between Froebel and Tagore, as presented above, may be summed up now more preciously as follows : (a) There is a higher reality than that of the material world; (b) It is not merely an abstraction, a set of laws, or a mere projection of man's imagination; it is more real than the ordinary, everyday reality, has its own dynamic life and is conscious of itself; (c) It is eternal and universal and, therefore, is what in modern language would be called supernatural; but it is present also in Nature; it exists within every man as the inner essence or the principle of growth; it both permeates phenomenal reality and exceeds it; (d) This reality, which is a vast unlimited consciousness, holds in itself elements or aspects corresponding to life, mind and soul; (e) The two-fold aim of education is first to help the individual consciousness to enter into and grow under the direct influence of the higher consciousness and secondly to externalise the inner change in life outside, in action; life and activities, therefore, are as important and indispensable as inner growth. Tagore describes this double function as 'Love and Action,' 'introspective vision of the universal soul'. . . .and 'its outward expression in service'. Not only in theory but in their educational practice also both have insisted with equal fervour on joyous living and creative activities.

As expected, the ideas of the two great men regarding the process and means of education are also strikingly similar, and to

such an extent that it cannot be passed over merely as a coincidence. An influence on the Poet either of Froebel's writings or of the Kindergarten system with which Tagore must have been more or less familiar may, with justice, be admitted. But at the same time all who know the Poet will at once bear testimony to the deep relationship between Tagore's educational theory and his earlier experiences and writings. It is indeed an undeniable fact that Tagore's philosophy was inseparately linked up with the development of his own mind and spirit. Here also, as in the case of Bergson, Tagore may be said to have been helped by a kindred soul to find his own thoughts with less effort.

But, however, striking and far-reaching the resemblance may be, the difference remains in the final outcome, in the shape and pattern of things contemplated by èach, in the spirit of the whole endeavour. These differences will be pointed out in their due place, but the fundamental difference in standpoint or spirit that caused them may be noted here :

1. The two men, one, a Catholic naturalist, the other a Poet, arrived at the first view of their basic principles by different paths; Froebel through 'faith and insight' and prolonged, concentrated thought. But Tagore had it through revelations and experiences scattered throughout his life and any gaps or obscurities that might have been there in his vision, he filled up and illumined with his 'imagination'; with the experiences gained through his own ceaseless, almost furious, creative activities.
2. By nature, temperament and upbringing Froebel is more disposed towards intellectuality and religious sanctity. Two of the general principles of education laid down by him in *The Education of Man* are : (i) "To be wise is the highest aim of man"; (ii) "The object of education is the realization of a faithful, pure, inviolate and hence holy life". Froebel talks about the science of life; and his concept of Unity betrays a good deal of a mathematician's love for abstraction. And his preoccupation with the ideas of God and godliness never leave him.

   Tagore is by nature more emotionally aesthetic and imaginative, though not inferior in thinking power. He does not deny God. His own spiritual greatness has never

been questioned. But he did not see or make any distinction between spiritual and secular life, which to him were or could be converted into continuous, interpenetrating realities. He is not for the holy life as opposed to ordinary life but for a pure, beautiful life of joy, a life of love.

3. The differences pointed out above may now be seen to have risen from this—what Froebel calls God and sees as an abstract principle as Unity, Tagore sees as the Universal Man, the Supreme Person. Tagore's Universal is a fuller and nearer reality touching human life and mind at all points, not imperiously demanding any auster renunciation, rejection of aspect of man's personality, or curtailment in any way of total meaning of his life on earth. Being a Person himself, he fulfils in every way the person in man. Herein indeed lies the greatest, the most unique contribution of Tagore.

PROCESS AND MEANS

Tagore's ideas regarding the process of the pupil's inner development and the external means to be used, the centres of interest and types of activity necessary for that purpose, may be arranged as follows.

The principle determining and guiding at every moment the inner process must be freedom. This does not mean mere independence of control and right to self-will. It means, first, the liberation of all the aspects and powers of the personality, namely, the senses, the vital energies, the various mental capacities including intelligence and imagination, as also the functions of the heart—its feelings, emotions, sympathies and love; secondly, free, untrammelled interaction by means of the energies and powers thus, released, with the perennial realities of the universe : Nature. Man, and the Universal Man, who contains within himself and transcends both Nature and Man.

The process and the means, it will be seen, are interconnected. Freedom within should lead to freedom without—freedom which "lies in the perfect harmony of relationships which we realise in the world—not through our response to it through knowing but in being." The direction of this educational process, therefore,

is towards an increasingly wider, deeper and more effective harmony of relationships, and the aim is the growth of the total personality of the pupil through such relationships. This growth need not be limted by the current moulds and traditional patterns of our civilisation. It may become, for individuals who throw themselves heart and soul into the process, an accelerated evolution, an overstepping of the limits of the individual's potentialities at birth, in short, a process of transformation. This begins to happen when the individual succeeds in growing into the Universal consciousness and sharing its unlimited experiences. The passages quoted below will illustrate Tagore's emphasis on the value of the different aspects of the personality and on the central principle of freedom :

> "Children with the freshness of their senses come directly to the intimacy of the world. This is the first gift they have. They must accept it naked and simple and must never again lose their power of immediate communication with it. For our perfection we have to be vitally savage and mentally civilized; we should have the gift to be natural with nature and human with man."
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> "Vigour and energy are Nature's best gifts to children . . . childhood should be given its full measure of life's draught."
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> "Apathy and ignorance are the worst forms of bondage for man . . . In educational organisations our reasoning faculties have to be nourished in order to allow our mind its freedom in the world of truth, our imagination for the world which belongs to art, and our sympathy for the world of human relationships."
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> "In my institution I try to make provision for these three aspects of freedom—freedom of mind, freedom of heart and freedom of will."

It is interesting to note that there is an almost complete correspondence between the above principles and those enunciated by Froebel in his "Education of Man". The latter's insistence on freedom is well-known. He means by freedom the pupil's right of self-determination and his ability to bring out what is best in him and react with it to the diverse aspects of reality, namely, Nature, man, God.

But then the question arises, how, on earth, is the child to know what is best in him, to recognise the 'inner essence,' 'the principle of unity' in himself? By 'faith and insight' and sustained careful thinking as Froebel himself did? Froebel's educational policy does indeed demand an initial faith and the cultivation of the powers of thinking and insight. He believes that if the teacher successfully represents in his own behaviour the 'third principle,, (the first two being the pupil's need and the teacher's demand), the universal law in which pupil and teacher are equally subject, he may then inculcate the right spirit, the necessary insight in the pupil. To develop the powers of thinking and insight, however, the pupil should follow two 'general formulae of instruction':

> "Do this and observe what follows in this particular case from the action, and to what knowledge it leads thee."

And, "Exhibit only thy spiritual essence, thy life, in the external, and by means of the external in the actions, and observe the requirements of thy inner being and its nature."

Of these two, Dewey, who was greatly influenced by Froebel, followed the first and developed out of it his 'instrumentalism,' his 'activism' with its strong insistence on 'reconstruction' of experience and thinking. But the second, that of introspection, he completels ignores.

It is here indeed that Tagore makes his most unique contribution. Whereas Forebel concentrates on thinking out the problems, evolving formulae or inventing devices and procedures, his 'gifts and occupations' for example, and seeks to invest these with a symbolic meaning, Tagore depends more on environment and atmosphere so built up as to spontaneously evoke the pupil's imagination, and emotions, particularly the emotion of love. He opens on the educational scene the flood-gates of poetry and art, of the noblest and the most delicate sentiments and emotions. This he does in such a masterly way that nobody, not even the comparatively undeveloped mind need go away baffled and unsatisfied from the lordly banquet. He takes his cue from the Universal creator himself and organises his Asrama with untrommelled Nature as its background and scene, with men from all corners of the world living the creative life in amity and mutual sympathy as its members, with unlimited provision of

opportunities for varied relationships and free, spontaneous action. He finds the key to the problem of adjustment and response in his theory of 'the surplus' in man, the love and imagination and creative urge which exceed all utilitarian aims and are the common, though perhaps unrecognised, privilege of all men. The Indian seer in him discovers that the true and really effective process in education does not consist in learning through the intellect or even through a response of the whole personality, because this in itself contains no principle of growth, no forward thrust. It consists in a form of yoga, one quite unorthodox, accessible to everybody and of supreme practical value in education—the yoga of love. The Upanishadic verse which he frequently quotes to explain this communion has, thus, been translated by himself : "Those men of serene mind enter into the All, having realized and being in union everywhere with the omnipresent Spirit."

Equally important are Tagore's profound understanding of the three centres of interest chosen by him and the educational use he makes of them. He shows how around them may be built up a full programme of activities, a harmonious life, an integral and spontaneously developing curriculum. He vastly widens the function of Nature beyond the naturalistic-scientific and religious pre-occupations of Froebel. He does not ignore these aspects, but he also raises his Nature to the status of a companion with whom man may enter into personal relationships through aesthetic appreciation, imagination and love.

Under the second head, Man, Froebel envisages three kinds of educational activity : personal contact and relationship with individuals; living in a community and developing the Community-sense, and gradually developing an awareness of the 'Spirit of Man', and representing in the individual self the essential features and trends, the drift and impulse of man's evolution. He believed that 'Man is progressively growing, ever ascending from one stage of culture to another'. He thinks that 'an exhaustive, adequate, comprehensive knowledge of man' is essential in education and declares. "It is the destiny and mission of man as a member of humanity to unfold and represent the nature, the tendencies and forces, of humanity as a whole".

But can an individual by his own efforts pass the limits of the present stage of man's evolution ? Must one be tied down to

present conditions and the vagaries of the slow, spasmodic process of evolution ? Or is there the possibility of individual transformation ? Froebel does not answer. And for 'the attainment of the comprehensive knowledge of man' and the awareness of the Spirit of Man and the trends of its evolution he depends, as before, on his formulae of thinking and insight.

Tagore treats Man exactly as he does Nature, He approaches him not merely through the intellectual mind, but through the heart, through imagination and sympathy. "The best function of education", he says, "is to enable us to realise that to live as a man is great, requiring profound philosophy for its ideal, poetry for its expression, and heroism in its conduct". And he visualises clearly, and more fully than anybody else before him, the various educational possibilities of this centre, the diverse streams of experience that can arise out of it. He also sees and has demonstrated at Santiniketan how these possibilities can be achieved, these streams of living experience naturalised in a Community, an Asrama, built on the lines of the ancient Tapovanas. The various streams are indicated below.

1. Free contact and establishment of personal relationships within the Asrama with all or most of its members. This varied and intimate experience will enrich the pupil's personality by widening his understanding and imagination and strengthening his power of communion through emotions. If the members fairly represent the various cultural types and traditions of the world, this individual contact itself can give the pupil his first glimpse of the unity of Man.

2. Functioning freely as a member of the Asrama community by collaborating in educational, creative and constructive activities with other members and also by cheerful, voluntary service. If the community life is no organised as to incorporate and represent the tendencies of man's evolution, as Tagore expeted Santiniketan to do, then a full experience of the community life can very well give the pupil a real insight into the problems of humanity. More so, if the whole atmosphere of the Asrama is quickened with sympathy and goodwill, and the spirit of universal brotherhood and love breathed into it by the teachers and the leaders of the community. This indeed, according to Tagore, is the supreme role and function of the teacher. By living the life of culture and contemplation, of creativity and free communion

with the frofound realities of the world, he is to create out of himself the atmosphere of the institution.

3. A generous share of experience of the above two types should lead to a systematic and intensive study of the mind of Man as represented in his various cultures and civilisations. The regional cultures, however, should receive priority. The aims and objects of the Visvabharati as formulated by Tagore and recorded in the Visvabharati Memorandum of Association will throw light on this aspect of his scheme :

> "To study the Mind of Man in its realisation of different aspects of truth from diverse points of view. To bring into more intimate relation with one another, through patient study and research, the different cultures of the East on the basis of their underlying unity. To seek to realise in a common fellowship of study the meeting of the East and the West, and this ultimately to strengthen the fundamental conditions of world peace", to carry on research "with that simplicity in externals which is necessary for true spiritual realisation" . . . . . . "and in the name of the One Supreme Being who is *santam, sivam, advaitam*".

A non-sectarian point of view, a more sympathetic understanding of alien cultures, international fellowship and goodwill—these are some of the remedies suggested by modern educationists for the many deficiencies and ills of modern educational systems all over the world. In the West there are many who, driven by the desperate world situation, seek to tack these on to the narrow educational frameworks built on materialistic and pragmatic notions. But Tagore found them as the natural offshoot, the inevitable result of his fundamental position. And he clearly saw these principles not later than 1919, when The "Centre of Indian Culture" was published.

And even in this field of endeavour which necessarily must call for keen and sustained intellectual activity, Tagore puts all the emphasis at his command on the function of the heart, on humanising the cultural materials by means of sympathy and imagination, and free and spontaneous reactions of the whole personality. The ideas obtained through research, assimilated and synthesised in the depth of one's consciousness, must affect

one's life at all points and pass into the life of the community as living truths, integral portions of its own culture. "Culture, which is the life of mind," Book learning, or scriptural texts, may merely make us pedants. They are static and quantitative; they accumulate and are hoarded up under strict guards. Culture grows and moves and multiplies itself in life."

And a culture which is real and dynamic must also have its impact on the world of action. It must issue forth into numerous creative activities, the chief purpose of which is to bring out some of the qualities and aspects of the culture and provide through these enjoyment and illumination to the entire community. It must also inspire and activate free disinterested service of the community, society and even the whole of humanity. By this double process of realisation in life and in action, a number of the Asrama will maintain his communion with the Universal Man, who is also Visva-Karma, the 'world-worker', as Tagore puts it.

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TAGORE : THE PHILOSOPHER*

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highness, Prof. van Lohuizen,

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am greatly honoured by the invitation to address this very distinguished gathering on Rabindranath Tagore. He visited this country in 1920 and spent a few days here and I was able to find out this morning that there are some in this country today who had the opportunity of talking to him and knowing a little about him.

To talk about Tagore is a difficult task. He is a versatile genius, a poet, a playwright, a serious thinker, a social reformer, musical composer, a dramatic director, an educationalist and, not least, a great painter. He took to painting towards the end of his life, and he drew about 3,000 sketches. A composite personality like that baffles anyone who wishes to speak about him. His poems and songs deal with universal themes, the vicissitudes of friendship, the joy of love, the pain of desolation; what you may call the shame of infamous conduct; themes which are universal in their nature. But throughout his work you will discover a unity of inspiration. The inspiration is from Indian culture itself. Of course, he does not believe in India as a geographical entity. It is as a spiritual personality that he talks about India. He tells us, "I love India" because of the living words which she has gathered

* This speech was delivered at the Tagore Centenary celebrations in the Netherlands on the 19th October 1961.

through the tumultuous ages, the words which came from the illumined consciouness of our great seers. He writes in one place, "Oh Motherland, in Thee the whole world takes delight. First from Thy forest dwellings rose the sacred songs. First from Thy dawning spread the light of noble thoughts and deeds in epic verses told." He makes out that he is a lover of India, not of the Indian soil, but of the spirit for which India actually stands. The spirit of Indian culture is motivated by religion and the Times Literary Supplement, when it first reviewed his book on Gitanjali, said, "No poet was more religious, no religious man was more poetic than this great Indian." That is how the Times Literary Supplement reviewer put it. And the poet himself combined a brilliant imagination with a restlessness which makes him sperad the fundamental concepts of morals and philosophy throughout the world. How does the impulse for religion arise ? Everyone tells us that it springs from a sense of dissatisfaction with the actual world. The Upanishad writer asks to take us from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality. The Buddha looks at the world, finds it full of sickness, suffering and old age and asks : is that all or is there something deeper than this perpetual procession of events, which we call *Samsara*, or are we to think that we are destined to perish ultimately leaving no trace behind ? St. Paul asks us, "Who shall save me from the body of this death ?" Everyone of them being essentially religious affirms the reality of a Beyond which stands behind this whole process, informs it, animates it and makes it go forward. The Upanishad writer says there is the Supreme : Buddha tells us it is possible for you to escape from this world of suffering and attain enlightenment—Nirvana. And the Christian scriptures proclaim : death has no sting, the grave has no victory. He is risen. Handel's Messiah tells us, "Though worms devour my body, yet will I see God in flesh." There is, therefore, this kind of proclamation of Reality underlying this transient world; this world of time. Time is not all, there is timelessness in time, behind time, informing it, that is how all these great religious people teach us. But it is one thing merely to have an intellectual apprehension of it. It is another thing, altogether, to have genuine relisation, an emotional realisation, a realisation with your whole being. Many of us imagine that we religious people simply because we go to churches or temples,

worship there and chant hymns. But true religion consists of a complet transformation of human nature. It is something which is attained at enormous cost and many people are not prepared to pay the cost. Tagore himself again and again, pointed out how man is both an angel and an animal. There are elements in him which provoke our admiration and love, also our contempt and horror. He writes in a poem, "Obstinate are the trammels, my heart aches when I try to break them. I put on the shroud of dust and death; yet I hate it, I hug it in love." There is the contradiction, the duality. What the theologians call 'man' is a homo-duplex. He has the elements of both time and timelessness in him. If we wish to integrate this contradictory nature of man, if we have to make this man, who is incomplete and degenerate, something which is complete, whole, unified, it requires a process of discipline, self-control, a process of meditation some people would say. Well, all these exercises have to be undertaken by human individuals who wish to complete themselves. We know that intellectual man, as he is at the present moment, is not the end of cosmic evolution. It has gone on from matter to mind, from mind to intelligence; it has to grow from intelligence into spirit. Man's intellectual consciousness and this can only be done by a process which is painful, because all things which we hold dear, when they have to be surrendered, mean pain. All growth belongs to the realm of tragedy in one sense of the term. Things which we hold most dear have to be surrendered if we have to grow in our own lives. So Tagore says, "I am restless. I am athirst for far away things. My soul goes out in a longing to reach the skirt of that dim distance O Great Beyond ! O the King ! call thy flute; I forget, I ever forget, that I have no wings to fly, that I am bound down in this spot ever more." So it is that he tried to point out to us that when we merely adopt ritualistic piety or doctrinal conformity we should not regard ourselves as being authentically religious. The truly religious man is one who puts the universal values higher than the values of any kind of group, nation, or anything like that. It was our good fortune in India that we had in our generation two such people like Gandhi and Tagore, who recalled to us the fundamental verieties of life and pointed out to us that religious values must be regarded as higher than any other values. When Gandhi was asked about the achievement of freedom by non-violent methods, when it was argued that it was

historically impossible and, therefore, he should adopt cunning and deciet, his one answer was : "If these are the only methods by which I could achieve freedom for my country, let my country perish." That is how he put it. "A fallen and prostrate India cannot be of help to herself or to the world. A free and enlightened India can be of help herself and to the world. I want my country to be free, so that one day she may die and that humanity may live." That is the way in which he interpreted the nationalism and the nationalist movement of which he was really the great leader. Therefore, it is necessary for us to look upon religion as something which requires us to surrender the relative values which we have, subordinate them to the Absolute Principle itself. If we know that there is an Absolute Realty we have an intellectual recognition of it and if, in addition, we are prepared to pass through the displine which will enable us to integrate our own nature, we will be able to have a kind of actual encounter with Supreme Reality. Again and again, Tagore emphasises, religion is not a matter of knowing, it is a matter of being. And he tells us in the spirit of the Upanishads, "I have seen, have heard, have lived in the depths of the known, have felt the Truth that exceeds all knowledge which fills my heart with wonder." I think he relates his own experience when he says, "I suddenly felt as if some ancient mist had in a moment lifted from my sight and the morning light on the face of the world revealed an inner radiance of joy. The invisible screen of the commonplace was removed from all things and all men and their ultimate significance was intensified in my mind; the unmeaning fragments lost their individual isolation and my mind revelled in the unity of a vision. I felt sure that some being who comprehended me in my world was speaking, seeking his best expression in all my experiences, uniting them into an ever-widening individuality which is a spiritual work of art. My religion is based on vision, on experience and not on knowledge." When once we affirm that religion consists in a personal encounter with the Supreme, that it is something which takes hold of your whole nature, transforms your being, makes you different from what you are, gives you a new outlook, a new way of looking at the whole world and things, you feel that you had a fall back in trying to give an account or a representation of that ultimate reality itself. Goethe tells us, "God may remain a phrase on our lips, an idea in our minds, but if it has penetrated

our being, out of sheer reverence we will keep dumb; we will not give any kind of expression to the nature of the absolute reality." He was merely echoing the ideas which you find in the Upanishads and which Buddha gave. They tell us that it is not possible for words or for our mind to grasp the nature of that ultimate reality. Man's homage, the finite mind's homage, to the infinite is to recognise that the infinite cannot be comprehended adequately by linguistic symbols or logical propositions.

All these are attempts to represent the reality. They are approximations, so to speak to the way in which the reality could be embodied for the finite mind of man; but we should never think that they are exclusive possessions. From the beginning of our history down till today we have had this idea of hospitality to the different ways in which the Supreme is represented. Tagore himself says, "We should remember that the doctrine of special creation is out of date and the idea of a specially favoured race belongs to a barbaric age. We have come to understand that any special culture which is wholly dissociated from the universal is not true at all". That is how he put it.

You find in the early Upanishads that the sages seek constantly that ultimate truth. The words used were; *sada pasyanti surayah.* The sages see constantly the divine, even as the naked eye sees the spread-out sky. Then they tell us, "Words along with mind return baffled, unable to comprehened the nature of that absolute reality." The Buddha tells us again the same thing. Asoka cut into rock : "Reconciliation or concord is the only meritorious thing. People must sit down and feel that they are all pilgrims on the same quest and not one of them has reached the goal. As fellow pilgrims they must be hospitable to one another and understand one another." Today, when the Republic is established, the country, though nearly 85 per cent of the population is Hindu, refuses to accept Hinduism as the religion of the state. We give freedom for all religions to be practised in their own way, to develop according to their own genius and reach the Supreme according to the light which is there evident in them. Such a kind of philosophy immediately results in what may be regarded as humanist ethics. Tagore's Hibbert lectures are called "The Religion of Man". On earth there is nothing nobler than the human being. Reverence for personality must be regarded as the ultimate principle of any kind of ethical doctrine. We have

deviated from it. We have humiliated millions of our countrymen in spite of the great proclamations we make that every individual must be regarded as potentially divine. We have suffered sorrow and shame on account of our disloyalty to the great principles which our ancient scriptures affirmed and asserted, because of that we had to pass through so much of humailiation and suffering and today, in the Constitution, it is laid down that if you do not treat other people with equality you have no right to expect equality from others. Unless you banish the sentiment of *apartheid* from your own hearts you cannot condemn *apartheid* in others. That is the way in which our leaders have put into the Constitution certain fundamental ideas; ideas which recognize the equality of man; ideas which demand that we should revere human beings and we must have reverence also for what other people hold sacred. It is spiritual good manners to respect what other people hold as sacred and, if we adopt the democratic method, we must adopt such a kind of philosophy. When Tagore felt that the country was passing through many difficulties and all those difficulties were not imposed from without, but were undermining Indian society from within, he wrote, "My head is bowed in sorrow. My eyes keep back the tears. My heart is rent by this reproach that we have not treated our fellow human beings with a sense of equality." It is not a question of trying to hide what is wrong with it.' We must have the courage to admit our blunders and we must try to remove those mistakes if we want to make any kind of progress in this world. That is how he put it. There are many people who think that, in India, the world is regarded as something which is illusory, not worth much, and that it is the duty of human beings to retire from the world, get into a monastery and seek their individual salvation. Tagore set himself against such a view. He tells us, "the Supreme h s taken upon itself the bond of creation. He is bound with us all, for ever." So it is not right for us to think that God is somewhere outside. You go on asserting that every human being is a temple of God, *deha*, the body, is *devalaya* or the temple of God. That is what we affirm, but if we don't accept it in practice, if we don't implement those ideas in what we do, then our professions are empty and they have no meaning at all. So he said, "Everyone should try to work for the well-being of human individuals in this world." He was a social reformer. We had the pleasure of seeing, as a

one-act play today—it was only one act that was given to us—how Buddha converted one untouchable who had faith in untouchability. It is Buddha's disciple Ananda, according to Tagore, who did it.

The next question again is that there are many people who believe that the things which are happening in the world are so tremendous that a feeling of human impotence is creeping into men's minds. We think that we are all pawns in a cosmic chess game played by the impersonal forces of nature. Many of us feel utterly helpless when things are happening waich outrage our conscience and which make us feel that we are not serving humanity but are trying to hurt, damage civilisation itself. There again Tagore said that "the human individual is not a helpless victim of fate or necessity. To all the others you give from me you ask." He addresses God : "to all other things, to subhuman species, you give, you don't expect anything from them; but from me you ask; you demand; you want me to use my freedom; you want to me exercise my choice; not exercising my choice is itself a choice."

Therefore, in these difficult circumstances, he tells us that we should exercise our freedom; we should exercise our individual initiative. If man had not exercised his initiative he would still today be where he was centuries ago, wearing skins and living in caves, when he devised a club to kill the beast or a flient to strip its skin for him to wear for his warmth. From that to this day man has been sitting in judgment on Nature, comprehending Nature, trying to understand what Nature's secrets are and trying to use them all for the purpose of bettering humanity. Tagore in one of his verses tells us, "At one pole of my being I am its stocks and stones, at another pole I am completely separate from all. I am an object of Nature, at the same time I have an element of super-nature in me. I am able to find out secrets of the world because I am able to withdraw myself; I don't feel that I am an item in the series of happenings in the world, but can sit in judgment over it." If man's inwardness, if his freedom, if his subjectivity, is lost, if he thinks he is only an item in a series of external happenings, if, he confuses himself with an object, he reduces his subjectivity to objectivity and his freedom becomes more or less confused with rigidity, some kind of unthinkingness, mindlessness. All the progress that has been made in this world

has been made because the human individual exercised his capacity to sit in judgment over things, comprehend them, utilise them for the will or the purposes which he himself has. If we do not have it, if we give up our individuality, if we believe that other forces are more important, we are not doing our human task. He puts it in one place: "I am alone as a creator. Within the depths of my soul, there is a place for eternal peace. While our eternal selves exist beyond births and deaths, the unions and separations, the gains and losses of the world, if we can make room for ourselves there, then we really lived." Earthly living is not living at all. Man should free himself, attempt to free himself from the compulsions of nature and the restraints of history. He must try to withdraw into himself and try to find out what the duty is which is expected of him, what his responsibility is. All the great works of literature, of philosophy, of religion are done by men who are able to concentrate all their mental energies on some aspect of truth, or some glimpse of beauty, and try to bring it down to earth, clothe it with emotions or put it in logical forms, frame philosophies or devise works of architecture. A great metaphysician of our age, who passed away some years ago, said, "Religion is what a man does with his solitariness." It is not merely "Religion" that man does with his solitariness; art, literature, philosophy—everywhere whenever the human individual has to achieve anything great—he has to withdraw into himself; he cannot be lost in a crowd. Much of the trouble in the world is due to the fact that individuals have surrendered their individual conscience—given it a away to the care of the crowd and allowed themselves to be dominated by people who merely ask them to fill themselves with anger and hatred and try to go about feeling that they are superior or inferior or aliea to one another. It is because the human individual has surrendered his principal responsibility of freedom that all the troubles in the world arise. Mischief in the world comes because people have lost the habit of sitting in peace; of sitting quietly in a room or thinking for themselves. All these are different ways of expressing that man is most human when he is most alone and, when he is in that mood, it is that the great works of art and literature, etc. arise. So it is that the uniqueness of man is emphasised by any kind of idealist philosophy. It makes, out that the human individual is here a co-creator with the divine. He has been asked to assume

that particular task and he has been asked to go about saying that he should do the work which God expects him to do in this world. The last address which Tagore gave was called "The Crisis of Civilisation", in which he said, "I expected great things from Western civilisation. I have not lost hope. I have not given up faith in the capacity of man. He can see the future and he can work for the achievement of that future. He will be able to do it". All that he has to do, as he says, is, "to give up certain things which have happened." If we look at civilisation, those which were animated by greed, jealousy, anger and hatred have passed out. Those which exalted the virtues of tenderness, compassion, understanding etc., they have chanced to survive, and it is the opportunity which we have today that we should try to do our utmost to make this civilisation something worthwhile. The function of any philosopher, any artist or any man is to give us faith in the future. It is the function of all such people to help us to understand that the future is something that is amenable to our treatment. Tagore said, "Civilisation cannot sustain itself on violence." An ancient truth which Buddha asserted is that, "violence breeds hatred. The conquered live in sorrow". It is not possible for anyone to feel that by the employment of violence, he will be able to bring about a new kind of world. Callousness of heart, softening of the moral fibre, cheapening of the man's worth and enslavement of man by machines—these are all the things that bring down a civilisation. Some people ask us to take pride in our own degradation, in our own enslavement. They suggest to us; here are causes for which you had to surrender life, your privacy, your values, whatever civilisation was sustained by in the past. When such things happen we have to look at past history, the rise and fall of civilisations in the world, and point out that civilisations which violated the moral law got themselves wrecked on the rock of moral law and those which tried to adhere to it, strove on. Nobody has succeeded. Well, such civilisations have a chance to survive yet. That is a lesson which history gives us. It has been a continuous assault on fatality by the free spirit of man. When we see the cynicism, the despair, people taking to personal happiness, stoic detachment or cynical attitudes of life going about saying that there is nothing real in this world, let us make the best of the few changes which we have here, such people are being untrue to the values by which civilisation itself has built

itself across the centuries. We have now an opportunity of either shattering that civilisation, which took centuries to build, or of restoring it to its value, giving the primacy to the human individual, making his conscience the supreme arbiter of what is to happen. Tagore with all his work tried to be the spokesman of our age. He tried to be the conscience of our age. He was called by Gandhi the "Great Sentinel", the sentinel warning us when we pass out.

It is a recurring phenomenon in the history of India, and in the history of the world also, that whenever we came into decline, whenever we came down to lose our faith in the ultimate values, some sages arose beckoning to us to get back to the path of virtue, get back to the road of rectitude and try to restore the balance. If we fail to heed that call, that means we are preparing for our own collective suicide. At a time like this, when people are getting made sometimes and love of power overtakes them, love of political power, economic superiority, we have to remember that there is no man who is free from this failing of love of power. An ancient historian, Thucydides said "Love of power is like a wicked harlot which takes hold of man and nations however great they may be, seduces them, brings them down to their ruin". That's what Thucydides asserted. Today again we have to be warned in the same way. Love of power is a thing which is like a poison from which nobody is free, no country, capitalist or communist, is free from that and we all have to beware, to scrutinise ourselves, and see to it that, in whatever we do, we don't go about employing it in that particular way. A renewal of spiritual values is the only way out. Tagore believed in regeneration through love and suffering. He became a guide for his generation, not merely in our country, but in the world. He bequeathed to his country and the world a life which had no littleness about it. He had a co-ordinated being, a kind of an integration which many aspire to and few achieve, and his example is something which may help many of us to follow. What one man can do, others can also do. He was concerned with the profundities of life, with the invisible spirit of man, the symbol so to speak of the undying spirit which alone gives us hope that we can build a new society and a new civilisation. These are not

impossible. These are not beyond the reach of man. All that is necessary is that each one should look upon it as his particular individual responsibility to do the best he can to further the interest of humanity and human welfare. Thank you.

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RABINDRANATH AND "THE PHILOSOPHY OF OUR PEOPLE*"

SAROJ KUMAR DAS**

The obituary on Rabindranath in the September issue of *The Modren Review*,— which, by the way, is a remarkable study characteristically luminous and objective, in detached admiration for the departed great,—makes an appropriate reference *inter alia* to his unquestionable eminence in the sphere of creative philosophical thought of the world. With a justified emphasis on the point it observes as follows :

> "In philosophy he is not a system-builder. He has been acclaimed as a Vedantist. He is of the line of our ancient religio-philosophical teachers whose religion and philosophy are fused components of one whole. His position as a philosophical thinker was recognized by his selection to preside and deliver the presidential address at the First Indian Philosóphical Congress in 1925, and also when he was asked to deliver the Hibbert Lectures which appeared subsequently as the *Religion of Man*. Both his poetry and prose embody his philosophy."

It is the purpose of the present writer, who happens to be one

* This was exactly the title of Dr. Tagore's address at the First Session of the Indian Philosophical Congress, held at the Senate Hall on 19th December, 1925.

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of the favoured two having first-hand experience of what lay behind this "selection" of Dr. Tagore, to represent with scrupulous care and precision the operative factors in the *denounement*.

My memory takes me back to a typical November morning with its soft, subdued light, when I had the privilege of conducting to the poet's residence at *Jorasanko*, Prof. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, (then) George V., Professor of Philosophy in the Calcutta University and the Chairman of the Working Committee appointed for the inaugural session of the Indian Philosophical Congress. As we had arranged to meet the poet by previous appointment, we were readily shown up to the spacious room on the first floor which, by strange coincidence, happens to be the room where the poet drew his last breath ! Within a minute or two of our arrival there, in stepped to the cadence of music, as it were, the Apollonian figure clad in the familiar flowing robe and cap. Bewitched for a while before that august presence, we rose instinctively to tender our respectful compliments, each in his own way, to the poet who, in his turn, greeted the professor with outstretched hand,—grasping upraised hands in his own with unusual warmth and cordiality. The felt impact of the situation was then too intense for thought or expression. But as remembered in tranquility, it has always appeared to me to be an enchanting study in contrasts. The light grey of early November morning matched with the dark grey of the poet's mantle presented a striking contrast to the aureole of his radiant face. No less striking was the contrast between the inaccessible height of the towering genius "that of the stars uncrowns his majesty" and the incredible breadth of the humanist's sympathy that offers, in his kindly condescension, "to the foiled searching of mortality" the divine "glory and consecration of a poet's dream."

To return to our theme now. As we resumed our seat, Professor Radhakrishnan duly acquainted the poet with the nature of our mission—conveying the heartfelt desire of the Working Committee to have him as the President of the inaugural session of the Indian Philosophical Congress. With characteristic modesty —which he was pleased to term "timidity" in his exuisitely fine "Address"—the poet declined 'to enjoy the honour' of occupying 'a chair' which, he could 'not legitimately claim' as his own, and particularly, as he wondered whether it would suit his 'dignity to occupy such a precarious position on an ephemeral eminence,

deservedly incurring anger from some and ridicule from others.' The Professor was not at all unprepared for a reaction of this kind, and argued the case for philosophy with such persuasiveness as could hardly fail of its purpose. That he had been favourably impressed and his diffidence got over was clearly attested by the generous acknowledgment in the "Address" :

> "The only thing which encourages me to over-come my diffidence, and give expression in a speech to my unsophisticated mind is the fact that in India all the *Vidyas*—poesy as as well as philosophy—live in a joint family. They never have the jealous sense of individualism maintaining the punitive regulations against trespass that seem to be so rife in the West."

No wonder that in such an edifying context the slightest touch from an enlightened quarter would set up sympathetic vibrations resulting in a harmony.

Having thus, attained a stable ground, and a firm footing at that, in our perilous excursion, the Professor made a further sally in the direction of unexplored heights of that myriad-minded personality, and to our unexpected joy, we discovered the master-mind in its elements. Being in the enviable position of the listening third of that exalted company, I was privileged to follow up in detail the track of the dialogue, which then proceeded on that high level. I hope I have succeeded in reproducing hereinbelow the substance of the relevant portion of the discussion :

> *S.R.*—"Is it not rather strange, Dr. Tagore, that the creative urge of Indian thought, which had embodied itself in the traditional systems of Indian philosophy, should have all on a sudden lost its vital flow and survived only in the shape of elaborate commentaries and scholia, thereby inaugurating an age of scholasticism in the history of Indian thought and culture ?"
>
> *R.T.*—"It is really, as you say, Professor, a strang phenomenon, and calls for an explanation. My own feeling in the matter is that the philosophical genius of our race, through ceasing at times to express itself in cut-and-dried systems of thought, never lacked its vital function."

S.R—"What you mean to say is that the vital current of philosophic thought was switched off into new channels of self-expression."

R.T.—"Exactly. Forsaking the high roads of expression and advance, the creative thought of India filtered down to the mass-mind, fertilising it and fulfilling its own mission in an unexpected manner. I wonder if you have ever gone through the philosophical fragments and devotional lyrics of Kabir, Dadu, Rajjab, as also the *Baul* songs of mediaeval Bengal, collected and published from time to time by my friend Pandit Kshitimohan Sen. These may not be quite in strict accord with the canons of philosophical orthodoxy, but they reveal nevertheless the historic continuity of the spiritual culture of India."

This part of the conversation flashed at once into my mind, with added authority and conviction as we later heard Dr. Tagore preaching in the "Presidential Address" :

"Plato as a philosopher decreed the banishment of poets from his ideal Republic. But, in India, philosophy ever sought alliance with poetry, because its mission was to occupy the people's life and not merely the learned seclusion of scholarship. . . .That may not be remarkable in itself, but when we find that these songs are not specially meant for some exclusive pundits' gathering, but that they are sung in villages and listened to by men and women who are illiterate, realise how philosophy has permeated the life of the people in India, how it has sunk deep into the sub-conscious mind of country."

This came in for further confirmation about four years later in the "Forward" contributed by the poet to Pandit Kshitimohan Sen's "Bharatiya Madhyjuge-Sadhanar Dhara," i.e., "The Tradition of Spiritual Realisation in Mediaeval India" wherein *inter alta* Dr. Tagore makes an authorative statement to this effect :

"India has, after all, a way of spiritual life, all its own—the veritable legacy of her soul. Its unbroken continuity has threaded its way through all the vicissitudes of her political career or status. What is striking about it is that this current

(of spiritual culture) is not hidebound by the steel frame of scriptual orthodoxy. The formative influence of learning, if it has any, is almost negligible. As a matter of fact, this traditional way of life is, to a large extent, unorthodox, unconventional and undetermined by social discipline. Its fountainhead, which lies hidden in the innermost heart of the people, has acquired a natural flow by breaking through the stony resistance of injunction prohibitions. The people, in and through whose hearts this outpouring manifested itself, were all recruited from the average or common run of people. But whatever they received and revealed in their own way was achieved neither by acumen nor by extensive scholarship (*na medhaya na bahuna srutena*)."

Now we proceed to the concluding part of our cherished interview. As the poet expounded, with sweet reasonableness, his own view of the problem, I was enabled to realise, in a moment of inspiration, the illumination of the "Dark Age" of India—somewhat paradoxical in sound but no less rural in sense. Having then obtained his final consent to preside over a ceremony, we took leave of him with appropriate greeting.

The long looked-for 19th December dawned with profusion of golden beams of light, which thrilled us with a happy augury, and happily was the promise fulfilled. Just at 10-30 A.M. half an hour before the scheduled time for the commencement of the function. I was deputed by the Professor to escort the President-elect from his *Jarasanko* residence to the Senate Hall. On being shown up to the chamber near the main stair-case on the first floor of the eastern block. I found the poet clad in his *garad dhoti, punjabi,* and *chaddar*—a veritable impersonation of beauty, proportion and harmony. As I stood up after a reverential bow at his feet, the poet greeted me with that characteristic smile of benign grace which had always the stamp of his personality, and remarked in an inimitable tone of geniality and an untranslatable turn of words : "*Tumi bapu away anek dukkhu diley*" [i.e., "My dear fellow, you have contrived to inflict on me a long-drawn trail of sorrow"] With the intrepidity of youth I made the ready retort : "It is only out of sorrow, such as yours, that we hope to reap a harvest of joy." A remark like this, read out of its context, may naturally appear to have an air of impertinence about it. But the endearing

tone and the reassuring smile of this great man, at the moment, drew forth from me the retort with perfect naturalness and propriety, and he also appeared to be evidently pleased therewith. Without losing a minute we got into the car, waiting ready for him, and started for the Senate Hall, followed by his distinguished guests, Professors Formichi and Tucci, in another car.

As the poet entered the Hall and stepped on to the dais—which, alas was the venue recently of three obituary celebrations in his memory—the expectant assembly in that spacious Hall was converted into a whispering gallery. Lord Lytton, the then Governor of Bengal and Chancellor of the University, arrived, with his household staff, to the minute, and as being probably the lineal descendant of a celebrated poet, greeted Dr. Tagore with evident warmth and marked emotion. At the conclusion of the Chancellor's opening speech, preceded by a brief welcome address from Sir Ewart Greaves, the Vice-Chancellor and Chairman of the Reception Committee, Dr. Tagore got on to the raised seat on the dais to deliver his Presidential address.

The setting in which he delivered it was a peculiarly felicitous one. A fairly long-sized table, about three feet high from the ground, draped all over in rich silk and mounted with a carpet mattress and velveteen pillows to line the two sides, served as the improvised platform for the purpose. Squatting cross-legged in the Indian ceremonial style on this raised platform or pulpit—symbolic perhaps of the eminence of the poet in the world of thought and culture, Dr. Tagore delivered the historic address. What with his magnetic personality and what with the grandeur of the theme, the poet-philosopher conjured up, with the thrill of a contagious fervour, the faded vision, in that uncongenial environment, of some ancient hermitage with the priest or the preceptor at the alter, discoursing on the secrets of creation or the life Divine. What lent a stage-effect to the whole scene and imparted a romantic grace to it was the enfeebled beams of the orient sun, piercing through the tinted glasses about a skylight on the southern side of the Hall and displaying their variegated colours, as they lit up in rhythmic succession the head and face of the poet, without causing any irritation to his eyes. It was strange to see that the tinted rays of the sun selected only a restricted area—kissing lightly the tips of his golden curls and intensifying the gold thereof, and finally vanishing at the crown of his head. It was an

unforgettable scene, at once realistic and symbolic. Towering, as he did, head and shoulders above others—even from a seated position—he became the chosen head for special illumination and consecration. To the imaginative mind, this romantic sight conveyed the suggestion of a pre-established harmony and affinity between the luminary within and the luminary without. Curiously enough, this adventitious light died away with the delivery of the address.

In this Oriental setting—in the mystic splendour of a cultural *milieu*—was delivered the memorable address, charged with a profundity of thought and fraught with a universality of appeal. "Superb", is the word for it—superb in conception, superb in direction, superb in elocution. The extraordinary clarity of his throat on that day, supplemented by the natural timber and pitch of his musical voice, contributed materially to the remarkable effect on the audience; and, as I saw him next at Santiniketan at the conclusion of the 7th of *Poush* morning function, the poet observed with evident satisfaction : "You see, I could have on that day made myself heard distinctly from the farthest end of the Senate Hall". With regard to the intrinsic valve of the address it must, however, be admitted that on the academic philosophy-mongers who always go sniffing for "system," home-grown, or imported, it is too apt to all flat. No "system," thank God, does it own allegiance to, nor is it what we had bargained for. Though it provides no system that supports, yet it offers, what is far more valuable, a stem that grows on the soil of human life, and perfects itself in a *Lebensanschauung*, a view of life, that does not merely mirror forth, but lives into. Reality. If, as Prof. Whitehead in our own day puts it, all systems must be regarded as transitory, true intuitions alone serving as a treasure for ever, Dr. Tagore's address may be said to have achieved the high-water mark in the artistry of truth. If, as Carlyle once said in a famous context, "all deep things are songs," this song of "The Philosophy of our people" is destined to survive for posterity as a classical inheritance. "when eternity affirms the conception of an hour." If as we also testify with Browning's "Abt Vogler" :

> "Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear. Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe."

the poet-philosopher has vouchsafed in and through this artistic performance of his the elevating faith :

"But God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear,
The rest may reason and welcome : 'tis we musicians know."

Even at the risk of impertinence I can not help transcribing here a few characteristic flashes of intuition, and conclude this imperfect and sketchy review, with a reproduction of the high-pitched key on which the poet closes his edifying address :

"As in the world of art, so in God's world our soul waits for its freedom from the ego to reach that disinterested joy which is the source and goal of creation. It cries for its *mukti* into the unity of truth from the mirage of appearances endlessly pursued by the thirsty self. The idea of *mukli*, based upon metaphysics, has affected our life in India, touched the springs of our emotions, and supplications for it soar heaven-ward on the wings of poesy."

"The modern civilisation is largely composed of *atmahanto janah*, who are spiritual suicides. It has lost its will for limiting its desires, for restraining its perpetual self-exaggeration. Because it has lost its philosophy of life, it loses its art of living. Like poetasters it mistakes skill for power and realism for reality. In the Middle Ages when Europe believed in the Kingdom of Heaven, she struggled to modulate her life's forces to effect their harmonious relation to this ideal, which always sent its call to her activities in the midst of the boisterous conflict of her passions."

"Let me close with a *Baul* song, over a century old, in which the poet sings of the eternal bond of union between the infinite and the finite soul, from which there can be no *mukti* because it is an inter-relation which makes truth complete, because love is ultimate, because absolute independence is the blackness of utter sterility. The idea in it is the same as we have in the Upanishad that truth is neither in *vidya* nor in *avidya*, but in their upon :

"It goes on blossoming for ages, the soul-lotus in which I am

bound, as well as thou, without escape. There is no end to the opening of its petals, and the honey in it has such sweetness that thou like an enchanted bee canst never desert it, and therefore, thou art bound, and I am, and Mukti is nowhere."

37

TAGORE AND THE HINDU RENAISSANCE

SWAMI AGEHANANDA BHARATI

I have taken some pains to illustrate my notions of 'Hindu Renaissance' in my autobiography; in fact this complex term figures as a central them in the book. I have also refrred to Tagore in the book, though I am sorry to say, rather sporadically. I take this opporiunity to present my idea of the modern Indian *Dichtrfuerst's* place in that Renaissance—or outside it—as an after thought or an appendix.

I must adumbrate my use of the term 'Hindu Renaissance. because this idiom has been used in so many mutually exclusive, or mutually hostile, senses, that any future use of the term without initial semantic clarification must be regarded as a travesty, both intellectual and stylistic.

Let me permit that may use of the term 'Hindu Renaissance' is by and large, a critical use; not derogatory or even deprecating, but critical. This ties in with my axiom that the best contribution a philosopher in the twentieth centuty can make is cultural criticism : an extensive evaluation of a culture which he has studied, but into which he has *not* been born. The sympathetic observer, the intitital outsider, see more than the indigenous thinker—and is, in his turn, open to sharper counter criticism. One tends to overlook the erratic in the culture of one's cradle; or, in the Freudian age, one tends to ss more vices in one's native pattern than elsewhere.

My use of 'Hidu Renaissance' then, entails these notions : historcally, the Renaissance begins when feudal Hinduism,

scholastic. Sanskritized, potentially snobbish but actually just highbrow was superseded by opposite trends, he older being rustic, the later mercantile in their origion and in their inspiration and perpetuation. The Bhavabhutis and Banas gave way to Tulsidases, Kabirs, Samkracarya and Vacaspati gave way to the Nanakas and Namdeos. Alleged literary contirivance gave way to alleged literary heart and feeling. Ideologically, conceptual pluralism and proliferation gave way to conceptual simplicity. Both in ethies and in the pursuit of religious dicsipline—*sadhana* —the stress shifted from potential diversification—through the rule of *adhikarabheda*—to the postulate of an ideal eventual unity of all spiritual targest—through the equally old rule of *samanvaya.* From toleration and the support, both scholastic and official, of different ways of life, ascetical, hedonistic, sensual, there was a shift toward asceticism as the one tolerable ideal, and the eschewing of the sensuous on the ideological plane. The Krishna of Vrindavan loses his votraies to Ramma of Ayodhya; playful sophistication loses out to rigid puritanism. Good things must be unpleasant, else they are not good. Between the fornicator and embezzler, the latter is the lesser culprit; the murderer finds more sympathy than the lecher. This is a drastic denotation of 'Hindu Renaissance'. But it is precisely this; and its ramifications are wide. Tolerance is writ large on the banner of Hinduism, today as it used to : the ancient and medieval—the pre-Renaisance Hindu. that is—knew that the Buddha was an atheist and that atheism was one of the ways of viewing things; the Jaina proudly referred to himself as the crest-jewel of unbelief, *nastika siromani.* But Renaissance Hinduism will have nothing of it : Buddha is made into a cypto-theist. the Jaina is so utterly non-violent that his unbelief can be ignored. Instead of adducing more instances of Renaissance idiom, I shall list a few typical representatives of the Hindu Renaissance—persons of widely different views but sharing the anticomplex-puritan-electric denominator : Nanak, Kabir, Tulsidas, Mira, Dayananda Saraswati, Rammohan Roy, Vivekananda, Gandhi, Vinoba. Against these, the 'unreformed', non-Renaissance paradigms : the Sanskrit *kavi's* one and all, the medieval Vedantins, the Hindu and Buddhist tantrics, Aurobindo, Tagore. Just as widely different from one another, but sharing their complex-hedonistic-electric denomination. Electicism is common to all Hindus, renaiscent and unreformed. Electicism is

samanvaya. and I do not think there can be anything by way of autochthonous Indian culture which is not eclectical. This has great advantages : it staves off fanaticism, tending to keep at bay its more virulent forms (there have been no stakes and no concentration camp of Hindu inscription, so far), it keeps alive interest in other views. It has some disadvantages : it tends to rarify and wash-out lucid doctrine and it tends to connive at intellectual compromise, and sloth.

You have noticed that I put Tagore in the rubric of the unreformed, non-Renaissance Hindus. This is a compliment if you appreciate my use of 'Hindu Renaissance'. You have also noticed that 'Renaissance' is not a diachronical term; there is no 'pre-Renaissance', because 'even now there are Hindus who deny and defy the 'Renaissance'. Indian music is an analogue : it is a style, not a chronological term—'classical' music is written against *films*-trash.

There is another facet to the Hindu Renaissance—Hindu nationalism. Hero-worship has had a strong foothold in Hindu India since its inception : Indra is the heroic image, Rama the heroic prototype. The somewhat depressing popularity, amongst orthodox Hindus, for such figures as Hitler, Subhas Bose, and a whole host of aggressive martyrs stems from that congenital hero-worship. And if austerity seems conjoined to heroism in a man, then he is bound to top the scale, with not too much regard for his objective merits and demerits.

Where does Tagore stand in this somewhat bewildering pattern ? His discussion with the Mahatma have elicited much comment, and sympathies have been divided. That was one of the rare instances where loylties and reactions could have been predicted. *Summa summarum* : the bird of beauty flying high and soaring in the sky of bliss and light, *v*. the bird starving and dying on this parched earth, no longer able to fly up, let alone gain those lofty heights. The evaluation of this episode yields an important instrument for assessing these two disparate minds.

Semiotic is not the strong side of either the poet or the saint, nor of the leader; we cannot really apply semiotic criteria to their sayings and their discussions when we evaluate their oral and literary output *per se*. Thus, when we can show that a set of statements is nonsense, we do not thereby impugn the specific propriety of such statements; logically consistent, semantically correct statements may be useless, unimportant, trite;

logically inconsistent and dyssemantical statements may be important—pedagogically, spiritually, and in other ways. Thus, Tagore and Gandhi did not talk about the same bird at all; the bird of beauty is not Gandhi's bird, and the starving bird is not Tagore's bird. They have not even been caught in the same cage; the only thing they have in common is that neither of them is an object of ornithological study. . . .

I would go farther: disparaging adjectives do not diminish the importance of great men's great dicta. The Mahatma's words were often sanctimonious; Tagore's words, *spoken* in a non-poetical setting, were often pompous. Indian critics and admirers of both must have been infected by western modes of criticism, or at least by some knowledge of the English or any other western language : because there is no word, hence no concept 'sanctimonous' in any Indian language including Sanskrit: 'pompous' might be rendered into the classic or into the vernacular by paraphrase, but the charge of pomposity, if interpreted into an Indian vernacular without previous warning and reference to a critical apparatus, would be taken as a compliment. Now Kalidasa and Bana and Dandin were contrived, but not pompous, nor sanctimonious. I do not find any pomposity or sanctimoniousness in Tagore's poetry; I find some in his novels, but then they are meant to be there, and meant to denigrate the characters that display them : the uncouth, unreformed Gora of the first few chapters of the novel; Sandip of *Ghare Baire*.

Tagore's world view is totally aesthetical—there is nothing new in this statement, and this is what one would anyway expect in any poet, or artist. But what is new is that he dared to subordinate the ethical to the aesthetical, showing that the latter was autonomous. This, to my knowledge, had not been done by any Indian poet or savant before Tagore. There were aestheticians of calibre, and there were aesthetical schools and theories. Abhinavagupta, Mammata; and the unique pattern of *rasa*-theories, which do no have any real analogue in the world's literature or poetics. But all of them presuppose a religious world-view, or an ethico-religious world-view; for all of them, the pre-eminence of dharma is axiomatic, whether the individual writer liked it or not. It is conceivable that authors like Abhinavagupta or Bhartrhari tacitly held an all-out aesthetical world-view; but neither of them overtly attacked the religious or moralistic axiom. If *kama* roughly

connotes the aesthetical as an hedonic element, it was—in M.N. Roy's dictum 'sandwiched between *dharma* and *moksa*', i.e. between exoteric and esoteric philistinism. In American parlance, the Indian writers, even the poets and theoreticians in poetics, were 'square'; in the same parlance, anyone who would instal the aesthetical as the primary axiom would be 'beat' in the Indian tradition.

It might be thought that the tantric tradition placed aesthetical before religious and moralistic criteria. But this is only apparent; for the tantric, just like for his orthodox fellow *sadhaka*, the target is not aesthetical, but esoteric. The hedonic element is, as it were, ancillary or a side-product. The sincere tantric detests pleasure for pleasure's sake just as much as does the orthodox Hindu or Buddhist.

Tagore's Philosophy is no doubt eclectic, but it is aesthetical eclecticism and as such the least harmful. Why R.G. Collingwood not only tolerated the eclectric, but admonished the artist to be one; more than that, he actually enjoined plagiarism as an instrument of artistic creativity : let the composer and the painter (and the poet, presumably) copy as much from his own work and from that of others as will aid the beauty of his own creations. Collingwood vitually removes 'plagiarism' from the list of derogatory art terms. Now I do not believe Tagore ever committed plagiarism. His early emolution of the *Baul* and *Bhatiyali* style, especially on the musical side is not even eclectical—for there is no reason why this phase of Tagore's lyrical output should not be regarded as a refined extension of those rustic styles. As I noted earlier, 'classical' is a synchronic term in Indian music and if Tagore's utilization of some specific Bengali modes were eclecticism, then the late Aftab-e-musiqi Fayyaz Khan Saheb's sons or Ravi Shankar's *kriti*-s would be eclectical by the same token.

Though I do not believe that Tagore's work proper—his poetical works that is—were eclectical, his philosophy certainly was, in no lessor degree than that of other Indian thinkers. It derived its ontological framwork from the Upanisads as seen through the monotheizing medium of Brahmo Samaj literature. It took its mystical inspiration, I believe, from the non-Aryan stock of that rich Bengali folklore which achieved its systematized form in the tantric tradition : the mother cult, the cult of woman as *sakti*, the mystical-orgiastic ambivalence of woman as the central

object of meditation, and the almost narcotic intensity of mystical involvement through the medium of mythological material. No Bengali writer, I think, can remain unaffected by this tradition so rich in anthropological interest, unless he makes a somewhat out of tune effort to emulate western models and to eschew Bengali elements altogether. This has been done by some good writers around the turn of the country, I believe, but then they are not really Bengali or Indian writers; for the mere accident of birth does not make a writer one who represents the art of his soil. Hardly anyone would call Koestler a Hungarian writer except when he wants to indicate the trivial fact of geographical provenance. Not so Tagore—he was a Bengali writer, and an Indian philosopher not a cosmopolitan writer or a cosmopolitan thinker. The problems which Tagore negotiates as a thinker (in *Sadhana* and in most of his essays) are Indocentric, ethnocentric. Sympathies with Hegel, Tolstory, the 19th century British writers are common to all Indian thinkers—these sympathies are by way of corroboration and they all follow the model "Hegel, Kant, Tolstoy, Keats, Eliot, etc., are good because they think the same as the Upanisads (the Gita, the Dhammapada, Ramakrishna, etc.)." The occidental numinous is delightful because the Indian numinous sounds similar. Cosmopolitan thinkers—the philosophical analysts of Britain and America chiefly among them—are not really *interesting.* Professional thinkers tend to be dull, their writings desiccated. Tagore was not a professional thinker. He was a professional hedonist, or aesthetician ; and the first Indian one for that.

38

THE UNMYSTICAL GURUDEV

NIRAD C. CHAUDHURI

Today, 50 years after his death, Rabindranath Tagore's standing in the West is nebulous. But it was not less so even in 1913, when *Gitanjali* (Song—Offerings) made him suddenly famous and brought him the Nobel prize for literature as the second writer in English to get it after Kipling. Only, the nebulosity was positive then; now its negative.

It was a small book of 101 pages containing his own renderings into English prose—poems of 103 devotional songs of his in Bengali. Its impact, however, was out of all proportion to its slightness. That was due to a sense of spiritual void created by the worldly splendour of the Edwardian age. The religious fervour of *Gitanjali* filled the vacuum. But this also created an airy image of him as a mystical consoler.

The West was thus put on a false scent about him and prevented from seeing him as a poet in flesh and blood. Tagore seems to have had an inkling of this even on the day he got the news of the prize. Edward Thompson, his first biographer, was with him and found him 'disquieted' by the reviews of his latest book of translations. *The Gardener*. Tagore himself said, "You see, they have labelled me as a mystic and when I provide something which is not mystical they are offended."

Actually, his critics would have been started if they knew what he himself thought of his visit to England in 1912, which was to result in the publication of *Gitanjali*. He considered it to be a pilgrimage. He was setting down his musings on his third visit

to England at the age of 50, and when on the Red Sea, he wrote that many persons had asked him why he was travelling to Europe.

He said that he could have given a convincing reply to such a question about his two earlier visits to England in his younger days, for they were for worldly ends, entering either the Indian Civil Service or the Bar. But that sort of explanation could not be given for a visit at 50, when all Hindus travelled only for spiritual welfare. Indeed, he added, some of his acquaintances had assumed that. But they could not understand why for that he should go to Europe, the land of gross materialism. They said, "The only path to salvation lies in India; he should go to its holy places and seek the company for sadhus."

Upon this, Tagore joined issue with the objectors. He did so not with a defence, but a challenge. He said defiantly, "If we go to Europe with faith in order to face Truth with unprejudiced eyes, can we say that there is another spot in the whole world to compare with it ?"

He continued, "We hear the stock saying that Europe is materialistic and devoid of spirituality. Whatever the reason, when a notion like this gains currency, there is no need for it to be true. What five persons say is repeated by the sixth without question, and the chorus of many voices supplants reason."

Then he set down his test of spirituality : "Wherever in human society we find welfare in any form, its source is spiritual strength. That is to say, men can never attain to anything true by means of machines. It has to be gained by the spirit. So, if we see progress in any form in man's condition in Europe, we must concede that at its root lies the spirit of man. It can never be a creation of matter. Outward manifestations bear witness to the power of the spirit. To see outward existence as the only reality is to become incapable of seeing the inside and even to see the outside in its true light. Europe, too, has her inside, her soul, and when we shall recognise Europe's spirituality we shall also meet Truth."

He illustrated this with surprising examples from Europe as well as India. The European example was drawn from the sinking of the *Titanic* earlier that year. In it, he said, men and women brought up and steeped in wealth and luxury, used to thinking of

themselves alone, and, to all appearance, oblivious of the rest of mankind, stepped back to make way for women and children to the lifeboats and deliberately chose death.

This self—sacrifice. Tagore said, was not by chance individuals, but by a whole order. It could come only from a heroism nurtured by spiritual strength over centuries. That alone let them to their triumph over death in a terrible ordeal. Then he asked. "Is there no connection between self-sacrifice and spirituality; is it net a sign of the strength which comes from religion ? Does spirituality consist solely in avoiding contact with other men, in keeping the body uncontaminated or in telling beads ?"

For Tagore there was no spirituality without compassion, and he asserted that among his countrymen there was, as he defined it, "a parsimony of selflessness". He gave some horrifying examples from his own experience of which I shall cite only two.

He was then living in a house-boat in central Bengal. One morning it was moored to the bank. The previous night had been stormy and the river was in spate. He noticed the body of a woman being carrid away by the swift current and called out to the men on the bank to take out his jollyboat and rescue her. Not one man stirred. Then he offered five rupees to anyone who would volunteer. A whole crowd jumped into the jollyboat. The woman was brought up and resuscitated.

The other example was of a fire in the bazzar of Bolpur near Santiniketan. His students went to put out the fire but could get no help from the local men. Only four Afghan usurers came. And then the Hindus refused to lend pitchers to fetch water lest they should be polluted by the Muslims.

He explained the difference by referring to Christianity : "The seed," he said, "which had fallen from Christ's tree of life had borne fruit. The living germ in it had sprouted in readiness to accept sorrow as an acquisition." He continued, "Europe has listened to the message that Heaven's mercy makes man's solve adoptman's sorrow as its companion."

Such views were bound to alienate him from his countrymen. But he was not adopted by Europe either. Thus, in spite of his literary achievement his personal life was a double tragedy. He was European in spirit, but as he was a Bengali by birth and wrote in Bengali, Europeans did not recognise him as one of them,

On the other hand, though he was a Bengali and wrote in Bengali, his people rejected him as an apostate on account of his European spirit and personality. The Bengali worship of the fetish Rabindranath today can make no difference to these stark facts.

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RABINDRANATH TAGORE : HIS LIFE AND WORK

E.J. THOMPSON

I

EARLY LIFE : FIRST LITERARY PERIOD

Bengali Poetry : Sources and Inspirations

Bengali literature has a double line or descent. The older is lineal from Sanskrit literature, and especially from Sanskrit lyric and drama. More than the great epics, the writings of Kalidasa have inspired a succession of poets in the Ganges valley. Jayadeva, in his *Gita Govinda*, in the twelfth century carried the classical style in its decadence into Bengal, of which he was a native—into Bengal, though not into Bengali, for he wrote in Sanskrit. His poem is Vaisnava, in the floweriest and most sensuous strain.

The second line of descent is the indigenous one of folk-lyric. A main current of this, also, is Vaisnava, in the songs of Chandidas and Vidyapati, who wrote in the fourteenth century. Chandidas wrote in Bengali, Vidyapati in Maithili. But Bengal has adopted Vidyapati as her own.

The Vaisnava tradition continues the strongest to this day. Just as the softer beauty of Kalidasa's poetry has touched the Bengali imagination far more than the sterner grace of the epics, so the cult of Krishna has made that of Rama sink very much

into the background. The race is emotional beyond any other in India, and Vaisnava revivalists have again and again set flowing a wave of excitement which has covered the province. Of these the most famous was Chaitanya, in the sixteenth century—Chaitanya, whom the sight of *kadamba*[1] trees in blossom would throw into ecstasy by reminning him of his beloved Hari, god of Springtide revels, Chaitanya, who walked into the sea at Puri, in a trance of adoration, and was never seen again.[2] He was no poet, but poets followed in the wake of the fervour which he initiated. But a sterner cult, the *sakta*,[3] has contributed its strain to folk-poetry. The sixteenth century Mukundaram *Kabikankan*[4] was a *sakta*; and perhaps the most popular of all songs are those of Ramprasad, a *sakta* who wrote in the time of Warren Hastings. His songs can be heard everywhere, and on everyone's lips. There is a vast amount of anonymous folk-poetry, variant on a few simple phrases and themes, to which the individual singer can give a turn of pathos or imaginative beauty. And there are legends, of which some belong to the great stock of Indian mythology, but others are local; many of these have been made accessible to the West, by such well-known writers as Lalbihari De and Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret Noble).

The Influence of the West in the Nineteenth Century

1. *On Literature*

Into this double stream of literary and intellectual tradition, whose diverse waters hardly mingled, the *pandits* and the folk-poets keeping aloof from one another for the most part, came in the nineteenth century the life and thought of modern Europe. No part of India was so powerfully affected by 'the New Learning' as Bengal. The tide came first through Christian teaching, the work of the Baptist missionaries at Serampur,[5] and, especially of William Carey. Of his manifold services to India this is not the place to speak; but he took all knowledge as his province, from grammar to botany, and he set Indian *pandits* working at translation and compilation. A great Indian, Rammohan Ray, gave the new-found Bengali prose that distinction which only genius could provide, and which neither native scholar nor foreigner could give. He produced the first Bengali prose which can claim permanent place as literature. The modern education,

in the thirties introduced by Dr. Duff on religious lines, and on secular ones (more than a dozen years earlier) by David Hare and Rammohan Ray, had immediate and tremendous results. Other influences contributed, among them the short-lived but electric force of that 'marvellous boy,' Derozio. The modern age of Bengali literature began; by the sixties an extraordinary ferment was at work. There were minds of many types busy; the patience of Iswarchandra Bidyasagar, purist and scholar; the sober skill of Hemchandra Banerji, introducing new but not very exciting lyric forms, such a decorous beginning as Bryant gave to American literature; the energy and intellectual force of Bankimchandra Chatterji, the novelist, 'the Scott of Bengal'; the unequal and grandiose conception of Nabinchandra Sen, 'the Byron of Bengal.' Greatest of all, in literature, there had come the genius of Michael Madhusudan[6] Datta, 'the Milton of Bengal,' the naturaliser of the sonnet and of blank verse, whose epic, the *Meghnad-bodhkabya*, handling Sanskrit classical legend in an essentially romantic spirit, is to this day the darling work of his countrymen. With the old school (and with the majority of the new) the statement that Rabindranath Tagore is a greater poet than Michael rouses scoffing anger.

2. On Religion

There was religious change, also. Carey and Rammohan Ray fought primarily for religious and social reform. How brave and successful a battle it was men realise to-day, remembering that widows are no longer burned on the banks of Hugli, recognising, too, how much of Christian thought has been adopted into the very breath of Hinduism. The Christian missionaries were not alone in their belief that Hindus were idolaters. The belief was held by the early Brahmos,[7] a fact which amazes the rationalist Hindu of today. It was the incentive to the enthusiastic propaganda of Debendranath Tagore, the poet's father, a passionate hater of idolatry, if ever there was one. In this belief Rammohan Ray founded the Brahmo Samaj, a theistic association. A presentation copy of his *Precepts of Jesus*, in my possession, contains the inscription, 'Wishing the success of the cause of truth and the total annihilation of idolatry in all forms whatever.' The Samaj was gradually constituted out of vague beginnings, and rightly traces itself to the inspiration of the great reformer and to

the small, like-minded band whom he gathered round him. After Rammohan Ray's death in 1833, it was kept just alive by the devoted Ramachandra Bidyabagish and by Dwarkanath Tagore, who had been Rammohan Ray's chief supporter. Dwarkanath Tagore, like Rammohan Ray, visited England, where he was received with great distinction and known as Prince Dwarkanath Tagore. When he died, he left a confused tradition of regal munificence and extra-vagance and a load of heavy debts which his famous son carried and paid, going very far beyond any legal obligation. That son, the *Maharshi*,[8] was father of the poet. He has abundant claims to remembrance on his own account. His austere and noble life, his singularly lofty and courageous character, won the veneration of his countrymen, as his title indicates. He set the Brahmo Samaj on a firm basis; and, if Rammohan Ray was its founder, he was its first law-giver. His *Autobiography* is one of the most interesting and least morbid of all spiritual documents, an exceptional book in every way. With him for a time worked the brilliant Keshabchandra Sen; but he broke away in 1866, causing the first of the Brahmo schisms.

Rabindranath : The Representative Man of Bengali Literature and Thought

It has been part of Rabindranath's greatness that he has gathered up into his work all these influences, and has cut a channel in which all these streams have flowed. To the classical and folk-poetry traditions he has joined the eager curiosity of the most modern mind Bengal has known, with a very wide, if not very deep, acquaintance with physical science. The beauty of his religious poetry has made him world-famous, but he was a love-poet first, and a nature-poet first and last and throughout his work. In literature, he has been the representative man of his time, in touch with the fulness of his intellectual heritage. Even in language he has been a mediator and reconciler. He brought the diction of the road and market into poetry, and married it with the great style of Sanskrit literature.

His Home and Surroundings

He was fortunate in his home. There is a Bengali proverb that the goddesses of Learning and Good Fortune, Saraswati and

Lakshmi, will not live together. Yet an exception must be admitted in the case of the Tagores. The family has known times of embarrassment and debt, but it has remained throughout one of the very first families of Bengal, with extensive possessions in land. At any rate, the poet has never known the grinding penury of so many of his 'threadbare, goldless genealogie.'[9] Indeed, I do not think financial difficulty has ever been the cause of anything that was done or left undone in his education and upbringing. But, though Lakshmi has been good to the poet, who has praised her in many a tender personification—Lakshmi, the ever-gracious, ever-smiling goddess—Saraswati might be said to have made his home her temple. No other family has a record like the Tagores. In addition to the distinction of leading the thought of the Brahmo Samaj and of so much of society in other than religious ways, in persons of Prince Dwarkanath and his son the *Maharshi,* the family has been rich in genius and talent. Rabindranath's eldest brother, Dwijendranath, now living in happy, extreme old age at Bolpur, is philosopher, and possessor of a prose style adequate to his thought; another brother, Jyotirindra, is an amateur artist whose pencilled heads have won the enthusiastic praise of Mr. Will Rothenstein—'I know few modern portrait drawings that show greater beauty and insight.'[10] A third brother was the first Indian to enter the Civil Service. His nephews, Abanindranath and Gaganendranath, are the Great Twin Brethren of Bengali, or, indeed, Indian Art. The former is head of the Art School which attracts pupils from all parts of the land, and often from foreign lands; for a long time, he was headmaster of the Government Art School. His paintings have now a world-wide reputation, several being particularly well known. He writes short stories, especially for children; writes as well as he paints, according to Dr. Brajendranath Seal. His brother, Gaganendranath, is unequalled as a black-and-white artist. The family leads in music no less than in the other arts; and the women are only less talented than the men. So that Rabindranath, from his earliest days, grew up in the one house where all the surging tides of the Indian Renaissance might flow round his daily life, and fill the air he breathed with the exhilaration of their fresh airs. That

'magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in faery lands'

rambling Jorasanko[11] house held that were anything but forlorn—rather, their waters thronged with the white sails of innumerable and noisy, eager voyagers.

Boyhood

He was born on May 6th, 1861. His *Reminiscences* have sketched the story of his early days. His austere father, more and more withdrawn from the world, yet aware of everything that happened in his vast household, was at first a pervading presence, seldom seen or spoken with, The boy lost his mother in childhood, and his up-bringing devolved much on to servants. On these first days he writes critically. Yet he does not seem to have had much to complain of. Tutors were provided, to whom he paid little attention. Schools were tried, which he soon managed to escape. All his life, he has declined the orthodox paths, with great satisfaction to himself and with almost unalloyed gain to his poetry. He was one of those boys who are unfitted for any sort of rough-and-tumble. It took a lot of apprenticeship to life, to make him forget his shrinking nervousness. His real education came, not from the desultory and experimental alternation of tutor and school, with a background of time spent with servants, but from the whole circumstances and environment of his life. The Jorasanko house is a vast, rambling congeries of mansions and rooms representing the whims of many generations. These run round a central courtyard, and look out upon crowded Calcutta. In the poet's youth, he could watch the strange, alien life of the poor who inhabited a cluster of miserable huts before the great house; and perhaps the dominant picture of his *Reminiscences* is that of a dreaming, interested child, standing with face pressed against the veranada railings. He could watch, too, the folk who came to bathe in the tank; and in these early days his mind was already storing many a vignette, many a swiftly-taken glimpse of habit or idiosyncrasy. Within doors was a life so varied and busy that it was abundant compensation for the outside fair that he missed, except as spectator. Here every movement found echoes, and the political and literary and religious disturbances rippled against these banks. His brothers were eager and full of genius. He was encouraged to write verse almost as soon as he could walk; and he was a member of secret societies that studied politics in what was felt by their members

(though not by Government) to be a very bold and revolutionary freedom. Music and drama were the air he breathed. He has told us of the way his eldest brother entranced the household with the poetical opulence of his *Dream-Journey*,[12] and of the way his fourth brother improvised melody after melody.[13] The women were hardly less gifted, and were certainly not less eager. The shy, sensitive boy made friends early with women, and found the best and most delightful of confidantes in his brother Jyotirindra's wife. Her death was the event which clouded his young manhood, years later.

His boyhood had notable experiences. He went into the country, a few miles above Calcutta, and his *Reminiscences* tell of the ecstasy with which he first saw fresh mornings and unspoiled sunsets. In words often quoted, 'every morning, as I awoke, I somehow felt the day coming to me like a new gilt-edged letter with some unheard-of news awaiting me on the opening of the envelope. And, lest I should lose any fragment of it, I would hurry through my toilet to my chair outside.'[14] Past the garden flowed the Ganges, in later days the lifeblood pulsing through his manifold work in prose and verse. Then his father, an incessant traveller, took the boy with him. He stayed some time at Bolpur, which today is world-famous for his school and retreat. It was characteristic of the boy that he should keep his eyes tightly closed, when journeying the two miles between the railway station and his father's home. He was unwilling to have anything gradual or disenchanting about his first sight. After Bolpur, came a month in Amritsar, and then the Himalayas.

Bengal Its Landscapes

There are two Bengals. There is Bengal by the Ganges, a land of luxuriant vegetation, of fields of an incredible lushness and greenness, of pools where black-and-white kingfishers dart and hawk, of great white-headed kites sitting on telegraph wires and poles, of stretching sandbanks climbing out of the lazy stream to sun their broad backs, of drowsy, drifting sails, and of that mighty, worshipped river. This is the Bengal which Rabindranath knows and has celebrated in countless passages, his life one with its life of steady flow and sudden storm and flood. He knows its rain-swollen currents, its dreadful roar and tussle of cloud and lightning and thunder, its exquisite peace and stillness, its vast

spaces. Then there is the other Bengal, lifted off the malaria-belt, dry and arid, a land where sandstone crops up, and laterite, where the jungle is *sal*[15] and mimosa and rough tangle of zizyph, with splits and fissures where dwarf date-palms grow and which *palas*[16] crowds in Spring with brick-red flowers. This Bengal, judging by his work, the hardly knows at all. His knowledge of it came late, when he settled at Bolpur,—for this first Bolpur sojourn was a very brief one, and the years of his manhood were spent beside or upon the great flood of the Ganges. Hence, his forests are conventional, are 'flowery forests' and entirely lack any distinctive word which shows that he has seen. But his riverscenes are as perfect as they are numerous. He is a river-poet, first and last. The Himalayas were the very soul of his father's passionate delight. But to the son they have been very little. They are magnificent scenery—towering, dripping forests, and slopes on which he has gathered a few charming conceits and comparisons occasionally. They have never given his spirit a home. In this respect, he differs not only from his father, but from his master, Kalidasa, a mountain-poet, if there ever was one.

His Writings : Beginnings and Juvenilia (1875-81)

In this *Reminiscences*, he has left some desultory notes on his first appearances in print.[17] These occurred before he was fifteen. He thus has the doubtful honour of standing beside Cowley and Mrs. Browning in precocity; and his first productions were no more valuable than theirs. Verse and criticism appeared in *Gyanankur—Sprouting Knowledge*. His brother Jyotirindra launched many projects, among them a line of patriotic, (i.e., Bengali-owned and run) steamers and a monthly, the *Bharati*. The latter enterprise and the boy-poet as one of the crew, and for long enough it was his medium of expression, so much so that his first fifteen years of literary activity might be called the *Bharati* period. His first long poem, *The Poet's Story*, saw the light in *Bharati*, and presently in book-form,—his first work to attain that distinction. In was his *Endymion* or *Alastor*. But for long enough he was to be writing *Endymions* and *Alastors*. It was no accident that Shelley became his favourite poet for a time. The shadowy world of a poet's inner adventures, of his loneliness, of his vast, vague, universal benevolence of love,—this spacious world held him in thrall, as the Realm of Faery held True Thomas.

In such a world, years may pass and yet seem to the captive like weeks. Another book, *Banaphul—Wild Flowers*—appeared about the same time, a collection of his lyrics, written at the mature age of between eleven and fifteen. Their character is sufficiently indicated by the book's title. Only a few keep their place in his collected works. He wrote, too, verse tales, *Gatha*, lyrical ballads, influenced by Scott. Wrote, also, most of the *Bhanu Singh* songs, with which, as nearly twenty are still in print, his literary career is usually considered to have begun.

Rabindranath has always been exceedingly susceptible to the simpler melodies, drawn by these far more than by the great classical achievements of the Muse, which win intellectual recognition from him rather than enthusiasm.[18] The lyric forms which Hemchandra Banerji was introducing from English were too ordered and conventional to take his fancy, but such artless strains as the songs of Biharilal Chakrabarti charmed him, and so, even more, and the old Vaisnava lyrics. He read about Chatterton, and, as was natural, his imagination was fired to emulation. He incarnated his Muse as *Bhanu Singh—Lion of the Sun*—a sort of play on his name, *Rabi* which means *Sun*—a supposed ancient Vaisnava lyrist. His intense admiration for the Sikhs and their martial history, so unlike anything in the annals of his own race, was probably responsible for the *Singh*. With these pseudo-archaic songs, he fooled his countrymen in plenty. He tells with glee how Dr. Nishikanta Chatterji was awarded a German Ph.D. for a thesis on Bengali lyric poetry, in which *Bhanu Singh* was given high honour as one of the ancient glories of his land's literature. He says today that the poems could have passed as old with no one who really knew the older Bengali poetry. The verses echo conventional themes and style, flutes and flowers and forests, Radha lamenting Krishna's absence or neglect and the poet comforting her. Rabindranath dismisses them with scorn, as the tune of a 'hurdy-gurdy' compared with the genuine music of the real Vaisnava poems. They are better than that, however, especially two or three which were written several years later than the rest.

First Visit to England, 1877

On September 20th, 1877, he sailed for England. He returned a year later, reaching Bombay on November 4th, 1878. His stay

was not a very happy experience, and he has preserved some unpleasant stories and added some unpleasanter comments, in his *Reminiscences*.[19] His prejudice against England, and things English, dispelled for only a short period following on the success of the translated *Gitanjali*, probably struck root in this visit. *Letters of a Visitor to Europe*, descriptive of his experiences, appeared in *Bharati*. He found England as inimicable to the Muse, as English poets have found India. As Schiller has observed—and the lines apply more to poets than to most men—

'Cling to thy fatherland, keep hold upon it
With all thine heart ! For in this soil thy strength
Has its firm roots, while in an alien land
Thou art absorbed for ever, or remainest
A shivering reed, for every wind to snap.'

Yet the English stay was not altogether fruitless. He saw snow for the first time close at hand, a magic sight anywhere; he made the discovery that human nature is very like human nature everywhere; and he read the *Religio Medici* with Henry Morley, an experience whose delightfulness he mentions gratefully to this day. Also, he had talks with Loken Palit, a fellow-student, the brilliant and unfortunate friend whose abounding vigour and eager appreciativeness carried Rabindranath forward into so many poetical assays.

Beginnings and Juvenilia Continued

This brief English sojourn way hardly a break in this first literary period. Scattered over, or rather, crowded into these years were a number of writings which deserve mention, if only to show his abundance and variety. Some were before the English visit, some followed it; but all preceded his twenty-first year. The prose was, on the whole, more noteworthy than the verse. His *Letters of a Visitor to Europe*, already mentioned, are fresh and free from pose. They are still precurable. He has always been a first-rate letter-writer, whether in public or private correspondence. Then there was a famous assault on Michael Dutt's *Meghnadbodh*. The poet smiles over this today, and expresses remorse. Yet it is vigorous and acute, and at the time when it appeared attracted much notice. The poet has always been the most independent critic of literature in Bengal, and one of the very few whose opinions

have reason behind them.

Then there was a very early novel, *Pity*. There was *Rudrachandra*, a blank verse tragedy. Young poets revel in gloom, and in these years the young Rabindranath took the mournful view of life which is usual at such an age. The drama, says Mr. Mahalanobis, 'is very melodramatic, with a stern father, a poet as lover, and the inevitable Ophelia-like Amiya. Both father and daughter die in the last scene, leaving the poet lamenting.' This poetic gloom is summed and massed in *Bhagna-Hridaya--The Broken Heart*. This was a lyrical drama, very popular at the time. Its songs and a few lyrical passages he has preserved in his *Juvenilia*. Of this poem he wrote, thirteen years later,[20] in language which recalls Keats's famous distinction between the imagination of a man, with his remarks on the imagination of the period between :[21] 'When I began to write *Bhagna-Hridaya*, I was eighteen—neither in my childhood nor my youth. This borderland age is not illumined with the direct rays of Truth; its reflection is seen here and there, and the rest is shadow. And like twilight shades its imaginings are long-drawn and vague, making the real world seem like a world of phantasy. The curious part of it is that not only was I eighteen, but everyone around me seemed to be eighteen likewise; and we all flitted about in the same baseless, substanceless world of imagination, where even the most intense joys and sorrows seemed like the joys and sorrows of dreamland. There being nothing to weigh them against, the trivial did duty for the great.' He adds, 'This period of my life, from the age of fifteen or sixteen to twenty-two or twenty-three, was one of utter disorderliness.'

Period of Intellectual Ferment and Literary Experiment (1881-87)

With *Evening Songs*, it became clear that he was a poet, and a new and true one. Yet it cannot be said that they were remarkable, taken on their absolute merits. One can say of *Queen Mab* that it contained the prophacy of genius, but not that it had any permanent worth. Something more can be said of *Evening Songs* and much more of the two or three best pieces; but the groups as a whole cloys with sameness of thought and epithet. Its great achievement is atmosphere; and the poems are free, straying and feeling after a metrical liberty undreamed of as yet in Bengali literature.

Evening Songs are almost more remarkable for the swiftness and completeness with which they were overpassed, than for their own merits, merits real enough but entangled in a jungle of subjectivity and hidden and choked by monotony of style. A break in this mood was provided by two musical comedies, *Balmiki Pratibha—The Genius of Valmiki*—and *Kal Mrigaya—The Fateful Hunt*. Music is in his blood, and Rabindranath has always been able to lift himself by its wings out of depression or morbid concern with his inward life. A famous singer in his own country, he has delighted mony Western friends also by singing his own tunes, of which he has composed hundreds. I remember, when we were looking over translations together, if I asked, 'What is the Bengali for this phrase ?' he would answer, 'Wait a minute,' and then, tapping the table, would sing through the poem in question till he reached the passage. He told me that once, when he was seventeen, he was speaking in a large meeting; and after his speech, the audience clamoured for a song, which he gave, straining his voice, so that (so in his modesty he alleges) it has never been right since. It is safe to say that this deterioration has been noticed by no one but himself. To his two musical comedies he gave a rapture which he tells us has never gone to the making of any other work of his. If so, it must have been rapture indeed, for no poet is more inspired, with a very fury of concentration, than he works, or more exhausted when the influence has ebbed. When *Balmiki Pratibha* was written, his house was a fountain of song, whose rejoicing centre was his brother Jyotirindra. Rabindranath, with his characteristic feeling after and annexation of whatever was useful to him, mingled Western tunes, from Moore's *Irish Melodies*, with Indian. The poem shows traces of the influence of English folklore. Its robbers are very like Robin Hood's band and it had a chorus of woodnymphs who are very like English fairies. Some of the songs remain popular.

From *Sandhya Sangit—Evening Songs*—we pass naturally to *Prabhat Sangit—Morning Songs*. The two books are usually coupled together. But I cannot understand how anyone can fail to see the immense advance represented by the latter and only slightly later book; advance in techique, in firmness of treatment, in objectivity, and in healthiness of tone and atmosphere. Ajitkumar Chakrabarti, the best of Rabindrath's critics, saw this, and always insisted that *Morning Songs* was one of his key-books, an epitome and microcosm of his later work. A shorter book

than the *Evening Songs*, it has more variety.

In a style new and immediately popular, he wrote his *Bibidha Prasanga*, or *Various Topics*. In these, the subject is of scant importance. the matter existing for the manner's sake. It is the young tiger sharpening his claws on the bark of any trees that took his fancy; and beautifully scarred the trees are, by the keenes of claws. The first novel which he cares to acknowledge *Bauthakuranir Hat*, belongs to this period. More important than any outward manifestation of it was the inward illumination which pierced through his world at this time, reaching him in a drab corner of Culcutta and flooding his mind with a happiness which has never wholly ebbed and has known many periods of renewal. His body, no less than his mind, travelled now, and his environment changed. He sojourned at Karwar, on the Western coast, in 1883, where he steeped his mind in the vast, spreading landscapes his mind in the sandy beach and winding estuary of the Kalanadi River. In December of this year, he married.

The Double Aim of his Art

Even thus, early, the double aim of his art and manifested itself—to get into touch with the vast world, in all its endless moods and expressions, and to escape from it. From first to last, his poetry has been the faithful transcript of his soul. Hence, when his mind had has been confused and muddied, his poetry bas been clouded and clogged. And when his mind has attained to serenity, either in clear vision of life outside or sitting aloof from the world-pageant, he has achieved that poise and clam for which he is best known in the West. His earliest poetry represented rather that side of him which sought escape and evasion than the wandering pilgrim-side. Therefore, in the collection of his works edited by Babu Mohitchandra Sen,[22] his first poems are entitled *Heart-Wilderness*, and *Prabhat Sangit* is placed in a section called *Emergence*. But now, in his Karwar stay this *Emergence* phase became what it was to remain for twenty years, the ruling mood of his activity. He wrote *Nature's Revenge*, the first of his non-symbolical plays. This has been englished as *Sanyasi*, and the reader can see how remarkable it is. On his return to Calcutta, he prote *Picture and Songs*, a series of lyrics sufficiently characterised by their title. These are more objective than any previous lyrics. 'Whatever my eyes fell upon found a response within

me.'[23] He had drawn closer to the stirring life withough he had drawn closer as spectator only. From his Jorasanko home he watched incessantly and with deepening sympathy the life of that jungle of poor huts before his door. He is still entangled in his mannerisms; but the technique is growing firmer with every book, and this book contains some very vivid effects and impressions. *Nalini*, a short prose drama, followed. This is no longer in print, and its theme, 'a tragedy of errors,'[24] has been more mercifully worked out in *Mayar Khela.* Nalini, the heroine, is in love with Nirad, but hides the fact. Disappointed, Nirad marries Niraja half in pique. The latter, learning the story. dies, possibly by suicide, and attempts in dying to reconcile her husband and his first and real love. But Nalini refuses reconciliation, announcing that she will soon join Niraja. In *Mayar Khela*, the heroine coquettishly sends away her lover, but afterwards repents in vain, for he has returned to a former forsaken love.

Literary Experiment and Effort in Many Kinds

These were days of extraordinary busyness and happiness. He was writing and speaking constantly. Prose and verse came alike with ease and abundance. *Alochana—Discussions*—miscellaneous essays, chiefly critical, was like nothing in Bengali hitherto. Rabindranath is a subtle critic, especially on the side of form. His criticisms are impressionist, as those of poets often are, but they frequently lay bare by a flashing stroke deep-buried truth which the professional critic misses, with all his careful search and adequate equipment—as the casual Bedouin may find an incription worth all that the whole effort of the archaeological survey party and their elaborately furnished camp was unearthed. But he has hardly taken his critical work seriously. *Rajarshi—The Saint-King*—is a novel of this time, afterwards used as the basis of his greatest drama, *Bisarjan* (*Sacrifice*). *Maya Khela—The Play of Illusion*—a musical drama, shewed his genius feeling out again in the directions it had taken in *Balmiki Pratibha.* It is hard to say whether his genius runs more naturally to music or to verse. Many of his songs owe their popularity to their tunes at least as much as to their words; and in many cases words and tune are inseparable. *Mayar Khela* added to the number of his popular songs. Like *Balmiki Pratibha*, it has a chrous of fairies, called 'Maids of Illusion.'[25] *Samalochana*, a second volume of prose miscellanies, was published. He made many disconnected raids

into public life and social politics, wrote and spoke on educational questions. Altogether, he was considerably the most important figure among the younger literary men. His activities drew him first into comradeship and co-operation with Bankimchandra Chatterji, the novelist, and then, when Bankim's reactionary religious views became pronounced and aggressive, into conflict with him. More than once, Rabindranath found himself and his words the centre of sharp controversy, notably after a lecture on *Hindu Marriage* in 1887. And, to crown this period of work, his first great burst of activity before he attained maiturity of thought and expression, he published *Kari o Komal—Sharps and Flats.* This book, with *Pictures and Songs*, represents the highr-water mark of his early lyrical achievement. Ajit Chakrabarti's distinction may be admitted, that *Pictures and Songs* have more imagination ? (fancy)[26] and *Sharps and Flats* more emotion. *Sharps and Flats* contains some of his best poems, or, at least, poems only just below his best. *Pictures and Songs*, as its title suggests, has his double characteristics : his melody, and his gift of landscape (not forgetting human figures). In these landscapes there is already present his quality of wonderful repose; but the picture are disjoined and fragmentary. There are far greater things in *Sharps and Flats*, especially a groups of splendid sonnets. This form he was to use with great success for the next four or five years, after which he abandoned it for an easy-flowing form, of seven rhymed couplets, the Muse in slippers. On the whole, he has written the rhymed couplet better than any other metre, and this particular modification of it is one he falls back on for expression of odd moments of observation or feeling. With these sonnets were others, more or less amatory and dedicated to glorification of woman's physical charm. These are flawed by conceits, often of the most exravagant kind. Bengali opinion had never condemned these; indeed, does not condmn them to this day. Michael's work, as well as that of older poets, is a mangrove-swamp of conceits—'silly even in the Bengali,' as Mr. Mahalanobis remarks, 'whereas Rabi does not sound so silly in the Bengali as he does in English.' The puerilities of the worst Elizabethan verse did not sound silly to the writer's contemporaries. But, though these sonnets did not horrify on literary grounds, they did on moral ones, and won for Rabindranath a quite unjustified reputation as daring and wicked. This reputation he enhanced in *Chitrangada*, before flinging all

smacked at society and at tradition. Important political writings belong to these incisive pages. Most of all, he enlarged upon the meanness and mendicancy of always petitioning Government—a foreign Government—for things wanted. Much of what is most independent, and not a little of what the authorities have found most troublesome, in recent Indian political throught, owes its spring to Rabindranath's teaching. He is the parent of many movements which today he disowns.

Joy in Nature

Yet this crowded time was noe of deepest and most of joyous communion with Nature. The family estates are not very widely scattered, yet sufficiently so to entail a good deal of travelling by boat. The chief, indeed almost the only feature of the landscape is the Padma, or Ganges. On its breast he spent wonderful days, and these leisurely hours built up the tranquillity of his later years. He is rarely happy in his landscapes till he has added a river to them. In the hunted years of his world-fame, whe notoriety became too much for him, he has many a time fled to his 'ducks and reedbeds,' as he once put it in a rejoicing letter to me.

In Contact with the People

At Shileida he came into intimate touch with the people at last. No man ever had less of class-feeling; this, as in many features of his poetry, he has resembled Shelley. Both aristocrats by birth, both have never accepted their heritage of social superiority. Now at Shileida the poet showed himself a good business man, and the *zemindari* prospered in his charge. He has always taken the keenest iterest agricultural improvement, and many new methods of farming have been introduced by him. In later years, his son Rathindranath was educated in the United States, the country which, in his father's opinion, gives the best training in practical science.

Torn Letters,[32] a delightful correspondence, gives a close picture of these dreamily wideawake years, with their leisurely busyness. In them we can trace the genesis of many, if not most, of his short stories; in them is many a beautiful sketch of life or landscape. Of the peaceful beauty of his mood in these days, the following passage gives a picture :

"I have an old acquaintance now with Evening on the Padma. When I came here in winter, and used to be late in returning

from office, I had my boat moored to the sandbanks of the further side. I used to cross the silent river in a little fishing-skiff. This *Evening* waited for me with grave kindliness. A peace, a goodwill, a rest were ready for me thoughout the whole sky. This silence and darkness on the waveless Padma in the evening seemed like a room in the inner apartments. My mind is one of Nature's household here, and her near kin—I have an intimate relationship which no one but myself knows. No one will under-deepest part of life, which is always silent and always hidden, gently stealing out here in the unveiled evening and unveiled noon, walks with silent fearlessness. . . . We have two lives, one in this world of men, and the other in the world of feeling. I have written many pages of the story of my life in that world of feeling, in the sky above the Padma.[33]

These *Letters* reveal his ever-stirring sympathy with the toilers. Towards them his attitude is never tinged even with mockery, far less contempt, while he rarely presents the more pretentious society of his land without a touch of bitterness or of scorn. Something of his pity and love for children was called out by the helplessness and simplicity of the *rayats*, who scrape their fields and look up for rain, perishing uncomplainingly if it does not come. Against this background of the broad, laden river, of humble lives, of stretching, solitary spaces, we see the loftiest and most fastidious mind in India, watching with infinite kindliness. His own loneliness is brought out in the *Letters*, with undeliberate but sometimes startling clearness. I have used the word 'fastidious' We find him passing over such universally accepted writers as Milton, without a word to suggest that their work meant anything to him, while he expresses his delight in Amiel's *Journal.* I have mentioned the joy with which, on his first visit to England, he read the *Religio Medici* with Henry Morley; and I have two enthusiastic letters lyrical in their thanks for the gift of William Canton's *Child's Book of Saints* and *W.V. Her Book*. It is these quieter, more intimate books that he has loved best.

Short Stories

These *Torn Letters* contain many passages of the best prose that he ever wrote. But the period of their composition saw a

swift succession of prose and verse, often of the highest merit. No poet has ever experienced a greater Maytide, following on the first flush of spring-blossoms. To many, this is his greatest period, and *Chitra*, its lyrical culmination, his greatest book. *Chitra* cannot hold this pride of place against the far stronger and deeper *Balaka* of later days. But the other opinion has justification, when we remember the time's astounding record of achievement, in short story, in drama, in essay and miscellaneous journalism, and in lyric. The short stories began in 1891, with the publication of *The Baby's Return* (englished as *My Lord the Baby*, a little smacking too much of journalese for such a simple, touching story). His short stories continued to appear monthly for several years. They have had boundless popularity, and boundless influence on other writers. The opinion is often pronounced that they are better than his poems, on opinion which deserves mention as bearing witness to their popularity and merit.

The First Group of Great Dramas

His earlier (and greater) dramas, the non-symbolical, belong to this period. Lyric, he tells us, he wrote in spring and summer and the rains, drama in winter. Trully the Gods filled the horn of his strengh to overflowing, when he could so confidently allocate separate seasons to the service of different Muses ! To this rule of work, however, there was an exception, *Chitrangada*, a drama which was written during the songtide, and is itself an epitome of all the songs he ever sang, a glorious thing throbbing with lyrical power and beauty. This is englished as *Chitra*, and the reader can see how masterly it is, in whole and detail. It is one of the summits of his work, unsurpassed, and unsurpassable in its kind. Immediately before *Chitrangada*, he had written *King and Queen*, already mentioned, and *Sacrifice*. If *Chitrangada*, on purely artistic grounds, must rank above these, as I think it must, it is only because in it he had no double purpose to serve, but simply followed Beauty.[35] Not that the play is without its symbolism—for it is the shrine of the loftiest and noblest meaning—but the poet for once was so captured by the loveliness of his own imagination that he wrote a play which is sufficient in itself, apart from any purpose maintained by it. The play met with its measure of rejection, as was fitting; was scorned and abused as 'sensual', the sort of work that might be expected from the author of the sonnets

of *Sharp and Flats*. But never was Wisdom more completely justified of one of her children. The play's form is superb, his splendid farewell to blank verse. From now on, he used prose or rhymed couplet for drama, finding (to use his own words) blank verse 'not graceful enough.'

If *Chitrangada* is the lovelier poem, *Sacrifice* is the greater drama, indeed the greatest in Bengali literature. It is amazing that work so excellent and varied in kind should have come together. The *Sadhana* period produced a fourth drama, *Malini*, as wistful and beautiful as *King and Queen* and *Sacrifice*. All these dramas are vehicles of thought rather than expressions of action; and they show the poet's mind powerfully working on the subject of such things in popular Hinduism as its bloody ritual of sacrifice. The dramas show also how the poet was emancipating himself from the tangles of the solely artistic aim and life. He is a strayed Hercules trapped, as he slept, in the woodnymphs' flowery meshes, and he breaks free in showers of scattered radiance. *Chitrangada* shows the failure of mere physical beauty, compared with the strength that is equal to life's tasks and needs—shows its failure even as beauty, on the plane of final artistic values. *King and Queen*, as I have already said, shows how selfish love can lead only to sorrow and ruin. *Sacrifice* shows how greatly we slander Eternal Truth when

> 'The wrong that pains our souls below
> We dare to throne above.[36]

Malini, that wistful and beautiful play, teaches that love and not orthodoxy worships God, and it burns like a slow, deep fire against bigotry. In all these plays, it is the woman who brings truth near; and often, the woman who is a mere child. It will be remembered that in the earlier *Nature's Revenge* it was by the path of love for a simple little girl that the *Sanyasi*, a Bengali Paracelsus, was brought home. . . . 'The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.'[37] But Rabindranath's shepherds (who are mostly kings and priests) when they become acquainted with Love find him an inhabitant of their own homes, unrecognised and overlooked long.

The Curse at Farewell, dramatic in form, is a one-act

phantasy. It might have been made tragic, deep, or sublime, but is none of these things. It is simply charming. After all, a poet is entitled to rest his mind sometimes, and merely amuse himself. And this poet's genius had been flowering and fruiting with the most unresting fecundity. *The Curse at Farewell* is the first appearance of a characteristic and delightful class of poems, dramatic snapshots, interviews and dialogues,—the poet's *Gods and Goddesses,* as they might be called, his counterpart of Browning's *Men and Women.*

Emergence of the Jibandebata Doctrine

After *Manasi,* the next lyrical volume was *Sonar Tari, The Boat of Gold.* This important and difficult book exposed him to a new charge, that of mysticism, which he has found harder to throw off than that other, of sensuousness. In this book, the prevailing theme is the immanence of the Universal in the common and particular. The poems are haunted by sense of the transitoriness of life. But the chief mark of *Sonar Tari* is the emergence in it of what was to be the characteristic idea of the phase of work through which Rabindranath was now to pass,—the *jibandebata* doctrine. *Jibandebata* means 'Life-God'. The *jibandebata* idea was a phase only, disappearing because through it he went on to his mystical apprehension of his Creator and Friend, God. But, while it lasted, it was important; and without some knowledge of the doctrine many of the poems of this period must seen the vaguest gibberish. It is partly because such poems have been translated and printed in the West, without a word of explanation of any kind, that so widespead a belief has sprung up that Rabindranath is a weaver of beautiful but meaningless words and images. The fact of the doctrine's clear emergence at this time may be mentioned here, while consideration of the doctrine is postponed.[38]

*Chitra—Beauty—*is the crown of this first half of the poet's career. This is a volume of lyrics, to be carefully distinguished from the drama englished as *Chitra,* already considered under its Bengali name of *Chitrangada. Chitra* is flawed by his usual inequality, and by the verbal repetitions which are sown so thickly through his earlier works, a jungle which a whole lifetime of poetic effort has only gradually thinned, and has never utterly cut away. But the book merits its simple, inclusive title. In no other book has he attained to more single-minded adoration and

celebration of Beauty. Half-a-dozon of the poems are of the most exquisite loveliness—the poem which he has englished, with even exceptional inadequacy, as *The Gardener, The Farewell to Heaven Evening, A Night of Full Moon, Moonlight.* The greatest poem of all, *Urbasi*, is perhaps the greatest lyric in all Bengali literature, and probably the most unalloyed and perfect worship of Beauty which the world's literature contains.

Chitra finished this first lap of his race. In its most consummate moments, he said all that he could say, out of this first period of aesthetic development. Never again was he to be sheer poet. From now on there is 'a human trouble in the hills,'[40] and all perception of beauty comes stained with reflection, often melancholy reflection. Increasingly there is an intellectual admixture, often where he should be most imaginative; and there is sometimes a very prosy admixture, hands catching at wings that would soar. Greater poetry comes, in the best moments of *Kshanika* and especially in page after page of *Balaka.* But nothing lovelier, nothing more entirely poetical, than *Urbasi* and *The Farewell to Heaven.*

Close of Early Literary Period, 1895

In 1895, *Sadhana* ceased to be issued. The same year saw most of the poems of *Chaitali*, the placid and beautiful sunset of this period of work. *Chaitali* is the late rice gathered in the month of *Chaitra.* The book of this name shows the poet gathering up the 'fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.' He is gleaning in fields which have given magnificent harvest. There is an autumnal atmosphere over the book. It is one of the most peophetic things that have ever come out of the human spirit. It looks back, in a mood of tranquil reminiscence, knowing the day's work well done; and forward, with screne anticipation. It is written almost entirely in 'Rabindranath's sonnet,' that flowing, peaceful form of seven rhymed couplets. Its poems are succession of pictures. 'The light that never was on sea or land,' the utter peace and toleration of the poet's mood, is over everything, transfiguring the commonest sights, a girl with a buffalo, a baby and a kid, a prostitute, the ferry plying between villages, folk going forth to their labour at dawn, making them all *sub specie aeternitatis.* It is good that this 'season of calm weather' was given to him, for there were stormy years awaiting him. Some

tattered rag of storm-cloud from the storms he has known already occasionally drifts on even these quiet skies, as in the ferocious 'sonnets' in which he castigates his own countrymen who wear European dress. 'Mother, you have fifty million sons who are Bengalis, but you have not made them men.' Yet even this anger is for new reasons. He rages less now because of the wrongs that are indigenous, the cruelties committed by Hindu society; and more for wrongs that are imported, for imitation of the West. He is entering on his 'patriotic' period. The first collected edition of his poetry appeared in 1896.

LATER LIFE : MANY-SIDED ACTIVITY

Period of Transition and Uncertainty (1896-1900)

So *Sadhana* ceased in 1895; and *Chaitali* appeared shortly after its death. These events heralded a very great break in the poet's career, which divides it almost as sheerly into two as Milton's time as Latin Secretary broke up his. The difference is two-fold.

Politics

First, as already indicated, the stream of his activity became muddy with politics. This was not unnatural, for politics were increasingly occupying the Bengali mind, till they became the obsession that they are today. What is strange is not that Rabindranath should have been drawn into the popular movement, but that he should have kept aloof from it so long; and, further, that, even when in it, and exceedingly prominent in it, he should have remained so lonely and independent a figure. To understand this, we have to remember, first, how detached his life had been, how austerely aristocratic his family traditions, mixing only with the best and most eclectic in Indian thought and life; and, secondly, with what a sense of the *Real* he was gifted. His attitude has always puzzled both his countrymen and the Government. Just as once an incredibly silly official proscribed as 'seditious' *Dharma-Prachar*, that throbbing protest agninst his own countrymen's bigotry and cowardice, and generous recognition of the courage and selflessness of foreigners whom he considered mistaken, so Bengalis, especially the 'patriotic' party, have

complained that he criticises even when taking their side. One of the silliest of the many silly catchwords that are today devastating Indian thought is the one that 'solidarity is essential' and that it treason to criticise what your own party thinks. Criticism must wait, like a thousand other good things, till *Swaraj* is obtained. You must postpone a visit to the doctor, no matter how ill you are, till you have a brand-new coat to go it. Rabindranath has never accepted this, or any other catchword. Nevertheless, I am bound to say that I think his *real* sense suffered a temporary eclipse, during the decade after *Chaitali*, and that it has had phases of obscurity from time to time ever since.

Change in Religious Attitude

The second new element now entering his work is religious. Hitherto, he had been an artist for Art's sake. His religion had been a sense of oneness with the Universe, such a religion as is common with literary men, the religion we find in Richard Jefferies's *Story of My Heart*. In a letter, he expressly said that he understood no dogma save the joy and love which are in the Universe. Incidentally, it may be remarked that this is almost the most tremendous dogma possible. Believing this, cogvinced of this, a man might well rest happy. But Rabindranath did not rest happy. There was too much of the puritan in his blood. In his household was the austere presence of his father, was the tradition of Rammohan Ray's courage and stern battle with ignorance and evil. Ajitkumar Chakrabarti's comments on the change which came to him are interesting. He suggests that the exhaustion which follows on creative activity shows that Art can never take the place of spiritual life. So (he says) Rabindranath passed away from his early mood and effort, because Art did not satisfy him. This is true enough; and to this day the poet's life shows this conflict, this restlessness. The aesthete is in his blood, and he can never repress his delight in form. But the preacher is there, too. Ajit Babu adds another reason[41] for the writer of *Urbasi* and the short stories becoming the author of *Gitanjali* and of the many prose pamphlets and lectures with which he has enlightened those of his countrymen and of the West who felt inclined to listen. This is, that the narrowness of his field of work was brought home to him. There was a very petty side to the *zemindari* work at Shileida. The *rayats* were picturesque and

patient enough, and had merits which won the poet's abiding respect and love in a measure which he never gave to his own class. But they also cadged considerably, and probably had some of the obstinacy, as well as the charming stupidity, of the buffaloes which they tended so ably. And the *zemindari* work meant listening to interminable and foolish stories, meant gathering and remitting rents, meant trying to get crass conservatism to adopt better methods of farming. Perhaps all first-class work has had a background of drudgery, and neither in his character nor in the quality of his artistic achievement has the poet lost by his Shileida years.[42] But it is not strange that he should have wanted a wider field of effort.

Bengali Life Very Narrow

In his country, at best, all effort is pitifully restricted. A nation without a living tradition of history, in subjection for nearly a millennium, and before that with warring and petty kings—a nation tied hand and foot by restrictions which the needs of the new time imperiously demand should be broken—in such a nation how can a poet become great or universal ? It is great part of the reason for Rabindranath having achieved this impossibility, having become both great and universal, that he recognised, as no other did, the sheer necessity of his people finding a larger life, a broader, free universe of discourse. After *Sadhana*, it is his incessant effort to find this life for them, to break fetters and shatter narrowness. Even before this, the short stories were, many of them, tracts for the times, embodying truth sometimes obvious and poignant, but sometimes truth which his own generation missed, though a latter cannot miss it, for

> 'Wise poets, that wrapt Truth in tales,
> Knew her themselves through all their veils.'[43]

And what he knew, and hid in three measures of allegory or incident, others will know hereafter. Further, *Sadhana* itself, in its immense scope of interest, had represented a very definite attempt to enlarge his country's range. While others were talking, he had been trying to build. He now came out into public life more and more. His attitude towards conferences and congresses had been one of contempt. They were mendicant

institutions, begging and petitioning. Worst of all, they were imitative, copying the West instead of taking native models. Nevertheless, though he despised congresses and places where men talk, he rapidly made his way to the front as an extraordinarily effective speaker. He lectured and wrote very busily, especially on political and educational matters. At his best he can hold an audience as very few men alive. One long place, *The River*, almost exhausts the poetical activity of the two years following the finish of *Sadhana*. But he delivered a course of lectures on literature, in connection with the newly-formed National Council, lectures republished as *Sahitya*.

Rabindranath's Mind Turns Back to the Past

Characteristically, it was through his imagination that he made his approach to politics. His disillusionment with the present turned his mind to the past. He turned to its heroic stories, to its noble ideals of service and meditation. If he idealised it, that was a natural mistake and one which everyone was making. The stories to which he turned were not Bengali ones, but chiefly Sikh and Maharashtra. Rabindranath has been a pioneer in every way, the first among his countrymen in so many fields of thought, that in considering his achievement the most watchful sobriety and critical detachment have to be maintained, lest admiration and amazement lead to over-praise. Sometimes one feels that there never was such a man, for vitality and range. Between 1897 and 1900 he published four important books of verse, *Kalpana*, *Katha*, *Kahini*, *Kshanika*. This is the time of the 'Five K's' : for there was a fifth, *Kanika* (1899), 'Chips from a Poet's Workshop. *Kshanika* is the lightest of all his books in tone. As Ajit Babu observes, everything[44] is tossed on waves of gaiety. It is a most important book. In it, for the first time, he raids the colloquial language seriously. He adopted the *hasanta*, or power of sharply truncating a word by dropping a last syllable which was a vowel one only,—a shocking innovation, and one which cut the *pandits* to the heart. Those excellent men have always interested Rabindranath. They make very frequent appearances in his work: and, as when Matthew Arnold introduces bishops,[45] one is always delightedly certain that they are going to make fools of themselves. I have letters from him imploring me to grant him one favour, that I will not read his verse with any

pandit. His Bengali *Gitanjali* I once showed to my old head *pandit* at the high school, a man of great Sanskrit learning. He ramped about the school like a leopard with an arrow in his side. The Bengali was so shockingly bad ! He was seventy-five years of age. but his voice was tremulous not with age but with anger. The second *pandit*, a much younger man, said that the poems '*bhala lage na*' ('do not taste well'), and he too complained of the exceeding badness of the diction. My masters were unanimous in the same charge. The headmaster, a sensible man, has frequently assured me that there can be no comparison between Michael Dutt and Rabindranath. The elder poet, he says, is immeasurably the greater, especially in point of style, his style being faultless and superb. Waiting once on a railway station, I began showing the *Gitanjali*, side by side with the English translation, to some students. Immediately, a crowd gathered, intensely curious, and read poem after poem. There was one mind among them; the thoughts were high, certainly, but the diction was mean and bad. And *Gitanjali* represents a late stage in the war between Rabindranath and the *pandits*. That war became acute with the publication of *Kshanika*. The *pandits* raised a howl of sorrow. They are howling still. *Kshanik* definitely represents the turning-point in his tide of popularity. One is puzzled what to say about such an essay as Mr. Yeats's famous introduction to the English *Gitanjali*. That introduction is most eloquent and movingly written. But a vein of misconceptions runs through it, from time to time outcropping to the surface in definite misstatements. Mr. Yeats's name carries so much authority that the wrong perspective of his essay has done as much as anything, even Mr. Rhys's book,[46] towards the misunderstanding of Rabindranath in the West. Mr. Yeats had no suspicion of the sharp division of opinion as to Rabindranath, and of the intense dislike with which his name is regarded by many of his countrymen. He writes, 'If the civilisation of Bengal remains unbroken, if that common mind which—as one divines—runs through all, is not, as with us, broken into a dozen minds that know nothing of each other . . . ' But this unbroken unity of Eastern minds is become an imaginary thing. In so far as it is not imaginary, it is artificial and superficial, the result of society's pressure, upon the individual. If an agreement so produced existed in England or Ireland, Mr. Yeats would not

think it praiseworthy. Praiseworthy or not, it does not exist. As to Rabindranath, 'my Indians,' as Mr. Yeats confidingly calls them, the handful of Bengalis domiciled in London, pardonably forgot that they represented only a section of opinion in much that they said. From their statements Mr. Yeats built up the conception of a rejoicing Bengal acclaiming its universal voice. The conception is a majestic one, and it has gone abroad and won such acceptance that it seems hardly worth while trying to show its falsity. Yet false it is. No man ever had such enthusiastic disciples and friends as Rabindranath, but no man has ploughed his way through such a cloud of detraction. From the publication of *Kshanika* the enthusiasm and the detraction have both been intensified. That book was a watershed, sending men's opinion definitely streaming to the side of freedom and progress or the side of tradition and stagnation. The title means 'What is Momentary,' and it expresses its modesty of scope and purpose. In these poems, he beguiled his heart-ache and misgiving, masking his mourning with laughter. Ajit Babu speaks of a spirit of 'mockery of his own pain,' and complains that it is hard to tell when he is serious. The poet's graver compatriots were deeply offended. He had danced his reputation away. But Hippocleides didn't care. He had learned to trust his *jibandebata* knowing well by now that he was never less in danger of mistakes than when he trusted his instincts. He was looking far ahead, to a time when neither *pandits* nor popular patriotic dramatists would matter. He never went back, either in style or manner, despite his critics. No man can jest in Sanskrit. But the use of *hashanta,* gave the voice and the rhythm something to break against. 'Obstructed by the pebbles of *hashanta,* the tune ripples.[47] This is his style today. As to the charge that he was not in earnest, that charge was made by the same men who had fund *Chitrangada* obscene. If he played for a space, between the two great activities, that of his earlier worship of Beauty and the one, about to begin, of worship of God, it is not because his mind was shallow. His irony rarely sleeps; and it was the element of sanity here, even when he glorified Ancient India most extravagantly. He had done with his old life, and was depressed with the knowledge that there were no more *Urbasis* and *Chitrangadas* for him. But he laughed at his loss. He was disheartened by Modern India, its noise and brag, and so he wandered in distant

times and regions of his land, playing in a beautiful countly of his imagination. He title asserted that he was entirely satisfied with the passing and momentary—

'The Bird of Time has but a little way
To fly—and lo ! the Bird is on the wing.'

But the underlying spirit denied this assertion. Like Matthew Arnold, whom he resembles in so many things, in his constant irony, in his love of moonlight and of river-scenes, in his desire to save religion by making it rational, in his elegiac and reflective strain, mass of all in his deep earnestness beneath playfulness and in the puritan who comes hand-in-hand with the poet, he is not least but most passionate when he pretends to abandon a struggle that is too much for him :

'Let the long contention cease !
Geese are swans, and swans are geese !'

or closes an ironically polite exposition of sheer folly with a hurled permission to continue to keep to it :

'"That or nothing, I believe !"
"For God's sake, believe it then." '[48]

It should be added that *Kshanika* contains village-pictures of great beauty. Many of its later pieces, especially, are of quiet grace, dealing with his beloved rains and rivers.

Flow of Verse Again (1897-1900)

He had now, after temporary hesitation, launched his boat again on a full stream of poesy. Everything followed in natural evolution. *Kalpana—Imagination*—expressed in visions of the past of India his sense of loss and his sorrow, in this transition time, before he realised that he had found a main current again. There is the same brooding dreaminess and grief as in Mr. Yeats's mourning for Deirdre dead and Maeve vanished for evermore. Many of the poems say farewell to his former self. Never was any poet such an unconscionable time in saying farewell. *Kalpana* is full of farewelling, of ululation and the waving of hands. In *The Season's End*, a very noble poem, he says goodbye both to the

tired year and to his own old poetry. The Bengali year usually closes in a brief spell of stormy weather, the period when most of the festivals are held in honour of Rudra, the terrible God. Rabindranath did not forget this. He was now more than ever, If that be possible, drawn to the rains, and to storms. Was increasingly pulled forward, also, to a stronger and more terrible life. *Baisakh*[49] uses the sombre imagery of the funeral fires and burning-ground. So far, as Ajit Babu points out, his patriotism had not taken a much more definite form than a general desire that his countrymens should walk in worthy ways. This mingled with a general sadness at parting from his own secluded life. *Kalpana* is one of his more important books, had of great poetical mhrit. *Katha—Stories*—and *Kahini—Tales*—are a series of simple narrative poems, mostly of the times of the Buddha and of the Sikh and Mahratta patriotic effort, two periods of self-sacrifice and royal renunciation. The ballad-form used in *Katha* is new in Bengali literature. *Kanika* means the chips or sawdust of a carpenter's shop. The book consists of epigrams, many of them translated in his *Stray Birds*. These are of all sorts, some trivial or commonplace, some profound or lovely.

Between 1898 and 1904, he wrote a series of dramatic dialogues, romantic in treatment and very powerful; *Sati, Narak Bas—A Sojourn in Hell,—Gandhar's Prayer, Karna and Kunid.*

Period of Great Political and Public Activity: Educational Effort; Religious Mysticism (1901-1907)

An important year is 1902. It saw the revival of *Bangadarshan—The Bengal Review*—a monthly, of which he became editor. It launched him on his great period as a novelist. It was the year of the foundation of his now world-famous *Asram—Retreat*—near Bolpur. Two miles out of Bolpur, many years before, the *Maharshi* had been attraced to a small group of trees on an uplifted, bare plain. Here he came to meditate, and round this nucleus he and his son since have plated noble groves. Rabindranath's *Asram* has become famous for its school. But the poet thought of more than a school when he founded it. The problem which had so long vexed him was with him as urgently as ever, that of his country's condition. His country seemed to him so broken and scattered, that the first need was to give it some centre where it might concentrate. This idea is with him

today, though now it takes a wider scope, and he would found a World-University at Santiniketan, the 'Home of Peace' at Bolpur. The old ideals of Ancient India, with its schools of forest-meditation, were strongly with him, and he was dreaming of renunciation. He wanted to work for the world, yet to be withdrawn from the world. His mind has been a plain of constant conflict, as I have said already.

> 'Ah, two desires toss about
> The poet's feverish blood.
> One drives him to the world without,
> And one to solitude.[50]

But he began with a school. Disillusioned as to what he might hope to do with his own generation, he thought of the children. India, and Bengal in particular, was afflicted with the worst system of education the British Empire knows, and Rabindranath, who had escaped its talons, was its sworn foe. He wished to cut out Calcutta University altogether, and to try to found a school in harmony with national tradition, and close to Nature, where the mind might be free to expand into love of Beauty and of God. A noble conception and experiment, of which more in place.

Finds Himself as Novelist

In this period, between 1901 and 1907, he became a serious novelist. He wrote *Gora*, the greatest novel in Bengali, a long story with the fulness of detail of the Russian novel. It is a study of the imaginative mind working apart from close touch with fact. He shows the new thought working in Indian society, and shows society at war with itself. *Gora* is the child of English parents, lost in the Sepoy Mutiny, and brought up as a Bengali. He hates Englishmen, until his supposed mother tells him that he is English. The book is a Bengali *Kim*. In 1902 he had his saddest year. It began with foreboding on his part that it was to mean separation from his wife. When she fell ill, he knew it was the end. Her death left him particularly desolate, with anxieties crowding in upon his life. He cut himself off from the world, and went to Almora, in the Himalayas. His youngest son was a baby, and one of his daughters was dying of consumption. As Ajit Babu puts it, he was both father and mother to them, in his lonely

retreat among the pines. Many of the ballads in *Katha* were composed for his boy. He wrote *Smaran*[52]—*Remembrance*—a series of poems commemorating his wife, poems of extreme pathos and beauty. In 1903 appeared Mohit Babu's edition of his poetry, in which poems of different periods were grouped according to theme or character. Another novel, *The Wreck*, followed, in which he shows how Hindu family relationships are based not on human feelings but on conventional respect and worship. In 1904, he issued a collection of his patriotic poems (in Mohit Babu's Edition), entitled *Swadesh Sankalpa*—which may be englished as *Resolution and Independence*. This volume proved very popular. Then, in 1905, came *Khea—Crossing* –a volume of lyrics. About this time his youngest son died.

The Partition and Public Excitement

In 1905 came events which for the time being put everything else in the shade for Bengali opinion. It was the time of the Partition, and Bengal went mad, Rabindranth flung himself into the battle. In all India there was no voice more powerful than his, no pen more effective. This was the time of his mightiest prose, whose periods march and burn. There is not much political writing in English which can match his best pages of this time.

An example of his passionate eloquence may be taken from his Speech at the *Bijaya-milan*—the *Festival of Meeting Together in Victory*—the great family festival which marks the fourth day of the *Durga Puja*, the national holiday of Bengal. In the mercy of God today we understand afresh what the Meeting Together in Victory means—understand, after so many years in which we have not made worthy preparation for it. Today we understand that the Meeting Together which will have give us blessing, will give us victory, will fearlessness, this great Meeting Together is not one in our courtyards but a Meeting Together in our land. In this Meeting Together there is not sweetnesss alone, there is the heat of blazing flame ! It is not satisfaction alone, it gives strength !' He goes on, 'It must be borne in mind today that the nationality of our land which has risen before our vision does not depend on any favour or disfavour of a king. Whether a law be passed or not passed, weather the people of England listen to our piteous cries or do listen, our country is our country eternally, the land of our fathers and of our sons and descendants, the giver

of life to us, the giver of strength, the giver of good.' Thus, the Spirit of Freedom uses different lands, but the one message. Rabindranath wrote songs which fanned the student-world a flame. He was the pioneer in many movements. As in Seileida days he had tried to introduce better farming and co-operative societies in the villages on the Padma, so now he went round establishing national schools, forming village committees and patriotic associations. Yet all the while an inward change was working. *Khea*, its title indicates, symbolised a passing from one bank of the stream of activity to another. It is his farewell, as many of its poems tell, to work to the life of public endeavour. Ajit Babu notes as characteristic of Rabindranath, from first to last that he should became absorbed in effort, then should turn from that particular phase for ever. Repeatedly, he has become entangled in bonds and than has burst them. No sooner has the full tune sounded on his lyre than strings have snapped, and he has become anxious to sound new tunes of new strings.[53] Contact with the world of politics gradually dispelled the golden mists of his vision of Bengal struggling to become free. The movement showed itself as stained with sordid selfishness, and as a riot of noisy brag and passion. More than all, the boet was longing endeavour to taste life to the full, of which endeavour his verse in a faithful mirror. But from varied experience he has striven to co-ordinate a whole behind it, seeking, as the Indian mind must, to find the One in the Many. This blare and bluster and intolerance was not *Life*, any more than the Neo-Hindu puerilities had been.

'His life was turning, turning,
In mazes of heat and sound,—
But for peace his soul was yearning.—"[54]

He changed suddenly. In one day, he resigned his membership of all political committees and bodies, and fled to Santiniketan. Here he gave himself up to educational work, to meditation, to poetry. Great was the clamour of abouse which followed him. It was assumed that he had given one more proof of the instability of the poetie temperament, that he had turned from the conflict to crown his head with roses of poesy and idlesse. But his retirement remained unbroken for several years.

Period of Retirement, of Educational Activity, and Religious Meditation and Poetry (1907-12)

He was now a marked man in official circles. Though he was not on the list of political suspects, his movements were watched, and a pay was placed in his school, an honorary worker. Rabindranath discovered the latter move, and gave the gentleman permission to resign.

One might have supposed that his withdrawal to Santiniketan was the result of a natural desire for rest, after the stupendous and unremitting expenditure of nervous power. This was not so. Half-a-dozen years of amazing effort followed. In 1908, a collected edition of his prose was begun. He wrote a series of symbolical dramas. In 1908 came *Autumn-Festival*, in 1910 *Raja* (*The King of the Dark Chamber*), in 1912 *The Post-Office*. This was the time when his religious poetry was written. *Naibedya* had come out in 1901, born out of due time. Now came, in 1909, *Gitanjali*, and seventeen small prose volumes of religious addressess entitled *Santiniketan* (1909-16). The addresses were delivered in his school. They are full of subtle thought and perfect expression.

In 1910, he showed signs of restlessness with so long seclusion from the world. He returned to it with suddenness equal to that with which he had quitted it. He came to Calcutta, and threw himself into the work of reorganizing the *Adi*[55] Brahmo Samaj, his father's society. He convened a meeting of the three sects into which the Brahmo Samaj and split, and a new society was started. He enlisted notable helpers, among them *Pandit* Sibanath Sastri, Binayendranath Sen, and Ajitkumar Chakrabarti. He brought Kshitishmohan Sen down from Santiniketan, and made him a regular *achariya*[56] of the Adi Samaj. Even before this, he had made Krishnakumar Mitra occupy the Adi Brahmo Samaj *bedi*.[57] The principal cause of the original schism, nearly fifty years before, had been Keshabchandra Sen's demand that the *bedi* should be open to all castes. Now, after so long a period, no-Brahmans again preached from the pulpit of the parent Samaj. But the conservative element beat the poet. After some months of intense propaganda, he threw up the useless effort and went back to Santiniketan.[58]

Period of World-Wide Fame and Growing Unpopularity in Bengal

For more than a year, he did not stir out of Bolpur. When

he again emerged, it was from more than Bolpur. It was from his reputation in a province to world-wide fame. From time to time strangers had found him out in his *asram*, thanks to a reputation which could not be altogether confined by a difficult vernacular. The poet made a third visit to England. What ensued is known to the whole world. He brought with him translations of his own later verse, which moved Mr. Yeats in the way in which he has told us, in memorable words.' Other English poets were equally enthusiaytic. The India Society issued to its members, in a delightful edition, the English *Gitanjali*, with Mr. Rothenstein's noble portrait. The same society issued *Chitra*, a translation of *Chitrangada*. Messrs, Macmillans took over the issue of his books, and a splendid success followed. Not since Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyam* won its vogue has any Eastern poetry had such acceptance. His fame spread over America and Europe. The poet's character endured some of the severest tests that had come his way. Homage and praise were showered on him. The same enthusiasm followed him on his return to India. 'It was roses, roses, all the way, With myrtle mixed in my path like mad.' His own countrymen awoke to his greatness. Even Calcutta University became aware of him. A few years previously, when some one had wittily suggested that a suitable way of honouring him was to have him oppointed as one of the examiners in Bengali for the Calcutta Matriculation, vernacular papers had protested, on the straight forward ground that he wrote bad Bengali. It had become a not uncommon practice in examinations for passages to be set from his works, with the injunction, 'Rewrite in chaste Bengali.' Sir Asutosh Mukherji, the all-powerful Vice-Chancellor of the University, told me that when he proposed, less than half-a-dozen years before the Nobel Prize award, that Rabindranath be made a Doctor of Literature, the Senate objected, for 'he was not a Bengal scholar.' However, in 1913, Rabindranath was crowned before the whole world with the Nobel Prize for Literature. Calcutta University sublimely followed, with a Doctorate, which the poet demurely accepted. Recollection of this last and most unexpected honour has cheered him in many dark moments. A knighthood came in 1914. But this rush of success embarrassed as much as it cheered. I was his guest when the wire came announcing the Nobel award, and I can testify that its first effect was depression. 'I shall never have any peace again,' was his cry.

It was a night of wild excitement without, the Santiniketan boys parading the grounds singing, the masters as excited as they. But within, the poet was troubled with misgiving for the future. We talked of other things, then wandered into the moonlight. Next morning, no trace was visible of his fears, but they remained, and were swiftly realised. Requests poured in for introductions to books, all sorts of books. Speaking from impression only, I should say that the poet resused none of these. This was the first mistake, one which soon made his introductions as well-known and little-heeded as those of certain English men of letters. Begging letters poured in, and requests for autographs. Strangers hunted him. I remember once calling on him in Calcutta just after visitors had represented themselves as the Governor of an American State and his party. Rabindranath had answered a number of remarkably frank questions, when he discovered that he was being 'interviewed' for a newspaper. Some of the letters he received were unreasonable, some insulting. One lady wrote that she understood that the English of *Gitanjali* was by Mr. C.F. Andrews. Would Rabindranath kindly send his own autograph, and give her Mr. Andrews's address, that she might obtain his autograph also, and thus have the signature of 'both authors' in her copy of *Gitanjali* ? As he observed, 'On the title-page it says, *Translated by the Author*. Isn't that good enough for them ?'

His English

Since this last doubt is one which gives him especial annoyance, I may as well say something about his English here. About the time of the lady's tactful request, a very highly-placed English official in India had sheered in public at *Gitanjali*, expressing a wish to know what Englishman had written it. Now this kind of insult not only questions the poet's good faith, but it shows the speaker incapable of judging English. Examination of Rabindranath's English soon shows that it is by no means perfect grammatically. It contains sentences which no educated Englishman would have written, sentences marked by little, subtle errors. There are others who could bear testimony that his English is absolutely his own, but I will speak out of what I know, having seen some hundreds of his translated poems before publication. He writes English of Extreme beauty and flexibility, but with mistakes that can be brought under two or three heads. First, he

is not quite at home with the articles. Secondly, he does not use prepositions as an Englishman would. Thirdly, he sometimes has an unnecessary word where clause meet, which makes the rhythm sag, like cloth with a stone in it. Add to this an occasional misuse of idiom, as 'I took my shelter,' where English says 'I took shelter,' and you have the whole of his slips. These things are but the tacks and nails of language. The beauty and music are all his own. It is one of the most surprising things in the world's literature that such a mastery over an alien tongue ever came to any man. Conrad conquered our language more completely; but he began to attack it in his teens, whereas Rabindranath was over fifty 'before I began my courtship of your tongue.'[59]

Universally Known and Misunderstood : His Translations

He was now established as a poet recognised universally. A cult of his work sprang up. His lectures were eagerly heard, he made frienships in England, the Continent was interested. To the Continent his work came necessarily at third-hand, translated from the English translation. But this did not diminish the keenness with which it was read, especially in France, Germany, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries. Perhaps his fame was greatest of all in America. Yet his real reputation began to decline, almost as soon as it reached its height. This is a cause of much betterness to his Indian friends, who assert that it is one more proof that the materialistic West is not competent to appreciate the spiritual depth and splendour of the East. I venture to challenge this conclusion. Rabindranath's loss of reputation to me is a distressing thing, yet I think the poet himself and his publishers almost entirely to blame. Very grave mistakes were made. *Gitanjali* was a selling proposition, as it deserved to be. So book after book was hurried out, almost fortuitously, and flung at the public. After *Gitanjali* came *The Gardener*, a selection from his earlier books. This gave pleasure to many. But the word had gone round that he was a mystic ' Misticism was the current catchword in the circles that think they make and understand literature, and the most unexpected people were talking of it. 'We mystics,' said the journalist and the popular novelist. I remember finding the poet, just after the publication of *The Gardener*, more vexed than pleased at an enthusiastic letter of praise from a distinguished English lady writer. 'You know, she

insists on seeing mysticism in all I write.' *The Crescent Moon* followed, and then the English *Sadhana*. His fate was sealed. Let me recur to Mr. Yeat's essy. His enthusiasm is so nobly expressed that the reader rarely stops to examine what is being said. Only once does he fall below a level of lofty praise, and that is when he writes ; 'These verses will not lie in little well-printed books upon ladies' tables, who turn the pages with indolent hands that they may sigh over a life without meaning, which is yet all they can know of life.' One wonders to find so hackneyed a smartness; Bagehot said much the same about Wordsworth, and the prophecy is a stock one with reviewers. That is by the way. What is relevant is, that this rate was exactly the one which overcame the poet's work. Out in India, the rumour reached us of mobs of worshipping ladies,' which he had the modesty and sense to avoid. But his work could not avoid them. Such a book as *The Crescent Moon* exactly hit the taste of those who litter drawing-room tables with 'pocket R.L.S.' anthologies, and literary confectionery of all sorts, appropriately 'bound in yapp,' side by side with the box of chocolates. *Sadhana* made wild with joy the kindred type which 'simply adores whatever is so delightfully Eastern, don't you know.' Both poet and publishers continued, unwittingly, let us hope, to draw these adorers. Several books by other writers, of remarkably thin quality, appeared with forewords by him. A man gets the discredit of what he praises, no less than of what he writes. When his short stories appeared, the first volume contained only seven first-class tales out of its fourteen. *Chitra* slipped out, a slim volume hardly noted. In the next few years, more lectures came, and yet more, mostly delivered in America, some bearing signs of haste and of more care for ornamental metaphor and illustration than deep though. The poet dug his groove deep, and kept to it. In translating, he more and more felt along one stratum only of his work, the wistful-mystical one. His boldest, strongest poems he avoided, or else watered down to prettiness. There came never a word of explanation, and his readers had not the intelligence to guess that he could not always have been this man, that there must have been change, probably had been progress, may have been retrogression. There came the mystical dramas, dramas which you were assured you could not understand unless you were very deep. By this time, most of his best readers had turned

sorrowful and disappointed away, convinced that he was a bird with one note, and that that note had already been heard once in its fulness and would only be heard in repetition and weakening henceforward. *Punch* found him very easy to parody. The reaction came. Mr. J. C. Squire[60] wrote of 'fastidious people' coming to 'the hasty conclusion that the Indian writer's reputation is founded on nothing more than a mystical bag of tricks and what has been described as a blue beard.' It is unfortmate that Mr. Squire should have selected for special opprobrium the touching poem which Rabindranath wrote for his dying child at Almora. But there is certainly nothing in the English translation to have told him what he was doing, and the passage, as it came to him, justified his assault. Rabindranath's work had gone abroad without a word of biographical explanation, without a note on *jibandebata* or on mythological or historical allusions. The reader was left to get what he could, and, if he said 'Oh, I can't make head or tail of this, I suppose it must be nonsense or else mysticism to deep for me,' who could blame him ? 'The only slightly moist bones of the translations,' said Mr. Squire, 'reveal a gentle and sensitive spirit, but very little more.' Had the poet from the first issued, in full translation, with the necessary minimum of explanation, a selection in chronological order from all his work, the verdict would have been very different. Or, after *Gitanjali's* first success, if he had given the West *Chitrangada*, one strong volume of short stories, then the volume containing the dramas *Sanyasi Sacrifice*, *King and Queen*, and *Malini*, he could have waited, secure of the most careful and respectful attention for whatever he published. And he could have left prefacing other folk's rubbish alone, though this meant sacrificing his boundless good-nature on the altar of the true Muses. It should be added that his false fame in the West seemed to have infected him also, and made him tend to be like what he was believed to be. He took to inserting in his English 'translations' pretty, pretty nonsense that was not in the originals at all. And his titles, in the Bengali so splendid always, were sugared. The fine and descriptive *Kanika* appeared distinguish as *Stray Birds*. So that the lover of poet's ranath who knows the original text regards the prose translations as something to he read for their pensive fearm as poems by a different writer and with no connection with him who wrote *Balaka*. From this condemnation, which must seem

sweeping, I except *Gitanjali*. This in English is, to all purposes, a new work. It is haunted book, haunted by Rabindranath's brooding personality. He kept those first translations by him and pondered over them so long that much of himself passed into them, as into no subsequent translations. I would except also, to some extent, *Fruit-Gathering* and *Stray Birds*. I am very conscious of the many passages of subtle thought and beautiful phrasing, which occur in every one of the English books. But it is undeniable that a maddening monotony of tone and diction and a sameness of imagery placed him far lower than his true rank as poet. As regards translation, his treatment of his Western public has sometimes amounted to an insult to their intelligence. He has carefully selected such simple, sweet things as he appears to think they can appreciate. Perhaps not one of the greater poems that he has translated is not badly truncated. Lest I seem to have spoken unjustly, I set side by side not a great poem but a very true and beautiful one and his English 'translation.' Its title is *Hppiness*.

'Today is free from clouds; the happy skies
Laugh like a friend; on breast and face and eyes
A gracious breeze blows soft, as if there fell
On these our bodies the invisible
Skirts of the sleeping Heavenly Bride;[61] my boat,
On the calm Padma's peaceful breast about,
Sways in the liquid plash; in distance gleam
Half-sunken sands, like creatures of the stream
Sprawling at bask; high, crumbied bluffs; and trees
Dark with deep shade, and hidden cottages.
A narrow, winding path its streak has worn
From some far hamlet through the fields of corn,
And dips to the water like a tongue athirst.
The uillage women, to the throat immersed,
Shrill gossip hold, their garments drifted round;
Their high, sweet laughter makes one rippling sound has
(Reaching my ears) with the light waves that run;
With bent head and with back stooped to the sun,
Sits an old fisher, weaving, while his boy
Round the moored boat splashes in naked joy,
Shouting and leaping, laughing in delight;
The buffets of his loving hands that smite

And cuff her, as his playful anger breaks,
The Padma with a mother's patience takes.
Before my boat both banks are plain in view :
A spreading crystal clearness tinged with blue;
On stream and land and groves, flooded with blaze
Of noon, a streak of varied colour play;
In the hot breeze comes scent of mango-flowers
Or tired call of birds amid the bowers
O' the shore.
Today in peaceful current flows
The river of my life; my mind now knows
Happiness as a very simple thing,
As simple as the opened buds of Spring,
Or as the laughter of an infant's face,—
Widespread and generous, filling every place.
Its eager lips their kiss of nectar thrust
Into each face, with childhood's silent trust,
Each day, each night ! Its strains like music rise
From the World-harp, flooding the tranquil skies.
Ah, in what rhythmic pattern shall I weave
That music ? How, that others may receive ?
And in what laughing language make it bloom,
And cause it what fair shape and face assume,
A gift for those must dear ? With what love make
It spread through life ? This easy joy how take,
How bring into the homes of men with ease
A boon so soft, so gracious ? If we seize
With eager zeal, it breaks within our hands !
We see it run ! We chase through distant lands,
But nevermore have word of it.
Today
Out of full soul with steadfast gaze each way
I look and look with charmed, delighted eyes,
Reflecting, as I watch the firm, blue skies
And peaceful, placid stream unquivering,
Happiness is a very simple thing !

I have rendered success impossible by tying my words in chains of rhyme, which necessitate an occassional (very slight) diffuseness which is not in the poet's finished picture. But the

poet himself used prose, in which he has often shown us that almost perfect success is attainable—certainly in such prose as his best. However, let us see what he has thought fit to give to his poor pensioners of the West. It is number 51, in *Lover's Gift* :

> 'The early autumn day is cloudless. The river is full to the brim, washing the naked roots of the tottering tree by the ford. The long narrow path, like the thirsty tongue of the dips down into the stream.
> 'My heart is full, as I look around me and see the silent sky and the flowing water, and feel that happiness is spread abroad, as simply as a smile on a child's face.'

That is all. But it is too much. The picture might have had value of its own—there are elements of value in it, niggardly precis though it is—had he taken any trouble to polish it. As it is, it is a handful of careless words thrown at a public that he seems to have come to despise. He has kept the perfect simile of the path like a thirsty tongue dipping down to the stream; but has ruined it by that touch of cleverness, a red dab of paint from rhetoric's brush. a dab which did not disfigure the original, which makes the path the thirsty tongue of the village. This conceit is good in itself, but had no business to intrude here, where nothing else has any suspicion of cleverness. Then 'the naked roots of the tottering tree' is a 'gag.' I suppose he thought the roots would look picturesque to his simple Western readers; so he brought them out of the 'bag of tricks' that goes with his blue beard.' And, of course, he had to add a *ford.* All Western readers aspect a ford to go with a river, even if the river is the mighty Ganges herself, about to unite in divine marriage with the Son of Brahma and branch into a thousand waterways, the least of their children a greater than Thames.

Growing Unpopularity in India; Mental Strain; Fourth Foreign Tour

Returning from England, he ran the gauntlet of homage, and fled to Santiniketan, as I have said. Here the honours already mentioned fell to him. And others also. A mob of five hundred, Europeans and Indians, in a special train, descended on him. He received them in a way which set every bar-library in Bengal buzzing angrily for weeks. I remember asking him a few days

later what he had done to make them so vexed. He flushed with memory of the annoyance, and then laughed. 'I told them I did not want this sort of thing. Some of you are my friends, and I value your kindness. But others of you are my enemies, you have always opposed whatever I stood for, and I can't accept your homage.' The hero-worshippers returned, and envy of his success and anger at his refusal to let it be exploited for purposes of empty national brag added a new venom to the detraction which worked more busily than ever. But the poet gained a measure of peace. He wrote the wonderful *Balaka,—A Flight of Wild Crances*[63]—greatest of all his books (written 1914). The vigour and freedom of these lyrics is amazing. The old man—for he insisted on regarding himself as an old man, though only fifty-three—brandished a fiercer torch than ever before the *pandits*, the owls and obscurantists and sticklers for old bad ways. Those gentry had had their beards too painfully signed to care to meet him openly, but they grumbled and worked secretly. He found himself, while his fame was world-wide, less and less of a popular poet in Bengal. The English *Gitanjali* ran into several editions before the Bengal emerged from its first. In this present year of grace (1921) I doubt if his royalties from all his Bengali books, fiction and patriotic prose as well as verse amount to three hundred rupees a month. I know Bengali novelist whose royalties last year were nineteen thousand rupees. But the poet had great consolations. Every mind that could think was with him, and, though his following might be small and growing smaller, there were the very brain and soul of his land. He worked on at his school. Its days of poverty were over, and never again would he have to sell his own library to find funds for it. He was an honoured guest at Government House whenever he cared to go there, which was as little as he could without being downright rude. In the beginning of 1916, he published *Phalguni—The Cycle of Spring*. I was one of the audience at the unforgettable first night when it was staged at the Jorasanko house by the Santiniketan boys, and the scenery and the small boys' appearance—as Spirits of the South Wind, and the Bomboo, and other distinguished personages—and their singing were too ravishing for words. It was a complete musical and scenic success. The songs have lived. Greatest of all was the poet's acting as *Baul*, the Blind Bard. But the drama was not a literary success,

and its reception by the critics preyed on the poet's mind. He was over-burdened in many ways. He had been passing through one of his greatest periods of song-production, when there were times when the house was never silent from his humming, and he had written his fine novel, *The Home and the World.* About the same time, he made one of his most unfortunate excursions into politics, in connection with the assault of certain Presidency College students on Mr. Oaten. The poet came down heavily and excitedly on the wrong side of the fence, writing passionately and unfairly in both English and Bengali. In any case, the whole affair was so trumpery that his commonsense in normal conditions would have kept him from getting mixed up in it. The strain upon him mentally and emotionally, from all these causes, brought him near breaking-point. There was estrangement between him and friends, there were misunderstandings, there was illness and practical breakdown. In the summer, he went to Japan. On the voyage, he translated his *Kanika* as *Stray Birds.* In Japan, he lectured on *Nationalism.* From Japan, he went to the United States, where he lectured on the same subject and on *Personality.* His tour was a stupendous success, but proved more than he wanted or could bear. He abandoned it, and returned to India. This was in 1917. Heavy sorrow came. His daughter died, in 1918, after long illness. Those who saw him going through the protracted anticipation will never forget his patience and courage. His brainstorm had passed, but his mind was still distressed. The European War was an agony to him, and he wrote incessantly about it. It dazed and bewildered him. He never did anything like justice to the nobler side of the tragedy. To him, it was nothing but a volcano shattering itself with fearful convulsions, the robber-civilisation of Europe flaming to well-deserved ruin. There is hardly a word in all his fiery denunciation that suggests that he knew that countless men as gentle and peace-loving as any Indian who ever lived had 'set their faces steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem,' knowing well that nothing but death awaited them, death when life was most holy and sweet. These men went not to kill but to be killed, and the world is immeasurably poorer today not only by these who died but by many of those who survived. Humanity in her throes did not receive from a great poet the help she had a right to expect. In this matter, at any rate, 'we shall march prospering, not through his presence.' His dislike of

England and things Western seemed intensified; yet he could not praise everything he found in his own people, and his *real* sense revived, bringing increased unpopularity on his head. He made an elaborate attempt to spread knowledge among his people by University Extension lectures and a Bengali *Home University Library*.[64] But he soon abandoned his schemes. In 1918, he issued *Palataka.—The Runaway*—his last collection of verse. It showed no falling off. The same period saw the creation of many of his best songs.

The Punjab Troubles

In 1919 came the Amritsar tragedy, and the Pubjab disorders and repression. Tagore became the national voice, once again finding a theme worthy of his greatness. No man in all India spoke with anything approaching his loftiness of protest. His burning indignation reached classic utterance, in his letter to Lord Chelmsford, renouncing his knighthood, the letter of a very great and representative man to an unfortunate man who had been confronted with a situation too much for his powers. 'The accounts of insults and sufferings, undergone by our brothers in the Punjab, have trickled through the gagged silence, reaching every corner of India, and the universal agony of indignation roused in the hearts of our people has been ignored by our rulers—possibly congratulating themselves for imparting what they imagine a salutary lesson.

'The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incongruous context of humiliation, and I, for my part, wish to stand shorn of all special distinction by the side of those of my countrymen who, for their so-called insignificance, are liable to suffer a degradation not fit for human beings."

His renunciation of his knighthood was declined, but he insisted on it, and has ceased to use the title.[65] With its disappearance, his friends felt a relief that a false situation was ended. Knighthoods are not for poets.

Fifth Foreign Tour

He continued to speak on the Punjab happenings, while refusing to countenance any measures of reprisal, such as a boycott or the non-co-operation movement which soon sprang

into being. He was dreaming of making the Santiniketan a kind of World Universit), a place where all lands might meet and exchange their best. So much scheming, and so much public work, drained him. I remember asking him in April, 1920, if he had ever known a period of deadness in poetry. He answered, 'I am passing through it now.' In that year, he went to England, where he met with disappointment. finding people less interested in his message. As this has been resented by many of his disciples, I think it only fair that we should remember several things. First of all, values have changed immensely in England. If Shakespere and Aeschylus and Kalidasa were all to come together to this post-War England, they would hardly be feted as in the old days when men had forgotten how stern life could be. Despite the apparent selfishness and frivolity of life, under the surface there is more hard thinking than ever before; and there is, with many of the best men and women, a renunciation like that which so many of their noblest made when the call came to the trenches, a renunciation of Beauty, that those who come after may have Life with Art and all good things added. Secondly, the poet's reputation has fallen into the hands, generally speaking. of those whom a wise man avoids, the lovers of whatever is dim and dreamo and only vaguely intelligible. Hence, a distinguished English man of letters spoke for many beside himself, when he wrote to me. 'Rabindranath is at Oxford, but I did not go to hear him. His poetical fame has suffered a slump.' Probably fifty years will hardly undo the harm his absurdly inadequate presentation of his genius to the West has done. After a brief stay in England, he visited France, and then America, in 1921 going to Denmark and Sweden and Germany. In all these places, he found friends, and made the impression which his noble personality and appearance never fail to make. At Copenhagen, there was a torchlight procession of students; in France and Berlin crowded lecture-rooms. He received the greatest possible homage. The Continent previously had never taken him up as enthusiastically as England did at first and, therefore, had not passed through the phase of dis-appointment. Even now, strict revision and a presentation of his work *de novo,* eschewing the old jumbling up work of all periods (but of one sort only) in the same volume, might prevent this phase ever coming at all. But this is too much to hope.

New Experiments in Form

On the eve of this last visit to the West, he published in the *Sabuj-patra—The Green Leaf*[66]—and other periodicals a series of remarkable experiments in a new form, which may be called either *vers-libre* or prose poetry. These pieces are at once prose as intricate and becautiful as he has ever written, and poetry that ranks with his best.

He has returned with his mind eager as ever for new effort, and to fresh activity. All his periods of active participation in public life have been followed by creative periods. He is now sixty years of age, and his experience is Dryden's at ten years older. Thoughts come so fast upon him that his only doubt is whether to run them into verse or 'the other harmony of prose.' Both mediums are at his choice and absolute command; and he has become almost as great a master of English prose as of Bengali, so that his craft can sail on many seas at will.

III

THE POET AND CREATIVE ARTIST

A Universal Poet

An English poet is reported to have said, in the first days of Rabindranath's vogue, under the spell of *Gitanjali* and the wonder of its perfection of beauty, 'He is a great poet, greater than any of us.' Very few English writers would believe this today. Nevertheless, he is a much greater writer than English critical opinion imagines. The first question is, how did Rabindranath, born in the Ganges valley, a Bengali, become the universal poet that he is ? For Universal he is, if only as a poet who has exquisitely phrased moods of misgiving and wistful trust that has been inarticulate but felt by men and women of many races. Even though his expression of these has frayed with much repetition, the achievement of *Gitanjali* remains, and the world will not be so ungrateful as to forget it. Believing, as I do, that this is not his greatest title to remembrance, I yet take my stand on it, as something admitted. The rest must be proved, or, at least, indicated.

Variety of His Work

Even the brief sketch just finished must have shown that there

is an astonishing variety in his work. Drama of every kind, and in every medium,—tragic, symbolical, comic, farcical; in blank verse, rhymed couplet, prose, and prose and lyric mingling,—novels, short stories, poetry reflective, religious, elegiac, purely lyric,—not even Victor Hugo had a wider range of form and mood, I leave out of account his countless essays and lectures, sermons, criticisms, writings on politics and and education, even on economics and psychology. Yet he was born a Bengali. The measure of his loneliness and greatness begins to appear, when we remember that even today, after forty years of his influence, there is no other remotely like him. This epoch has been Rabindranath's as emphatically as that of Dante was his, and far more decidedly than Shakspere's was his. He has had no Ben Jonson.

Bengali Opinion Provincial

Babu Ajitkumar Chakrabarti, who often took a very objective view of his country and time, notes how strange it is that he should have become so varied and various, or that he should have cared for life in its fulness and variety at all. He mournfully reflects upon the extreme narrowness of Bengali life, and on the ignorance of Bengalis. This is partly due to the pressure of caste, and to the strict *purdah* which secludes half the race and shuts their eyes. But it is inherent in wider and deeper circumstance. The race has no great traditions,[67] and when it would talk of history must adopt those of other Indian races. Timidity has tightened bonds which events first fastened, and has further circumscribed a sphere of work already very narrow and petty. They do not go down to the sea in ships, neither do they cross to other lands as soldiers. Their trade is in the hands of foreigners, of Englishmen, Scots, Parsis, Marwaris, Afghans, Armenians. Thought, as well as opportunity, is narrowed. It either becomes provincial, Ajit Babu observes, or else runs to ridiculous excess. On the least excuse, it shouts, 'Great is Diana of the Bengalis !' and brags that it leads the world, because it has produced a Tagore or a Jagadishchandra Bose.[68] Bengali thought is so provincial that any Englishman who praises Tagore is at once called his 'disciple,' since the popular opinion cannot understand that a man may admire intensely and yet keep independence and critical detachment. The Nobel award was commonly understood to mean that the world's opinion had sent him to the head of the class, with the corollary that his race also

now 'led all the rest.' Or, if Bengali opinion escapes provincialism, it falls into the slough of uncritical acceptance of everything alien. Bengali's greatest need, intellectually, is that its people should follow the example of their poet, one of the most independent and fearless spirits alieve and yet one who has unhesitatingly taken whatever he found good, from whatever source. The mass of his countrymen, as Ajit says, have never begun to realise how enormous their loss is, from these circumscribed, narrow experiences and lives of theirs. In a hundred passages, Rabindranath chafes against these bonds.

Rabindranath, as we have seen, was brought up in the one family where this disability was at its minimum. The mind is greater than its fetters, and here was pulsing, eager life. Hence, as the boy grew up, and came against restrictions on every hand, in the wider world outside his wonderful family, his early freedom 'lusted' against these restrictions, as St. Paul tells us the Spirit lusts against the flesh, Bonds and limits made is eagerness for the universal more clamant. There was much eagerness abroad among his people, eagerness which led to mistakes and consequent reaction into conservatism. Finding these other tides, the tide of his spirit flowed with them, and more strongly than they. As increasing power came to him, he battled for freedom, the more fiercely. 'In his poetry of every period,' says Ajit Babu, 'is a restless crying for adventure into the world.' This crying reached its most passionate as he passed into the thirties. Before that, the pageant of life had sufficed, the pride of the eyes had been enough. His aloof manner of living had fostered his critical rather than his sympathetic side. His fastidious perception of values had made him blaze up in passionate revolt against many things in his land. *Manasi*, as I have indicated, marks the fieriest moments of this revolt. There is the bitter, mocking poem which purports to be a dialogue between a Bengali husband and the little girl whom he has just married. There is *The Impossible Hope*, in which the chatter, chatter, chatter of the men around him seems to have driven him almost crazy. O that I were a desert Bedouin, he cries, instead of one of these meek Bengalis ! To live in the vast spaces, to skim the sands on my horse, to wield a spear, to risk my life, to commune with sun and stars and infinity ! To have some claim to call myself a man ! Then in other pieces he pours scorn upon the card-playing parties who talk glibly of a life which

is for men and not for cattle, who read about Cromwell and with a yawn of admiration turn to games and supper. Anger could hardly be more savage still, yet it is, in *Preaching of Religion.* A gang of young 'Aryan' bloods hear a Salvationist missionary call 'Victory to Jesus !' Banding together, as many as possible, they fan their valiant souls aflame. They must save the credit of their 'Aryan' land and name, and wonderful 'Aryan' religion. When they see that the missionary is dressed in the garb of one of their own ascetics and wears no shoes, they can hardly credit the evidence of their eyes. A sahib so meek and defenceless ! They make quite sure that he will not attempt to defend himself, and then rush on him all together, and knock him down and beat his head with sticks till the blood runs. The missionary is a figure of heroic pathos and dignity throughout. Suddenly the band imagine they see the police coming. They flee in cowardly terror, but revive in the calm of their homes, where they boast of their great triumph for 'Aryanism' and best their wives for not having refreshment ready for such warrior-husbands.[69]

The Conflict in his Experience

This conflict of experience, between the wide, full life close to him[70] and the narrow, mean world of his race and time, had its constant effect upon his work. That resolved itself in one aspect of it, into a lifelong attempt to escape from the narrower world, an attempt which took double shape. Sometimes it drove him in upon himself. At other times, it drove him for out of self, into the universal life and the worship of Beauty. First among his countrymen, he *lived,* in the fullest sense, shrinking from nothing that was life, fearing nothing that was strange or alien. Yet he came home to his own soul, and to God within his soul. That narrow vexing middle world, between himself and the infinite world, he transcended entirely. Or, if he came into it, it was in pursuit of his unresting endeavour to save it from itself, and to make it noble and beautiful. Hence the fulness and variety which make his poetic effort. His followers claim that he has not only saved his own soul, but also his comrades' homeward way. He is a pioneer in this, in his constant resolve to taste life to the full.

A Pioneer in Poetry, in Form and Manner

It must never be forgotten that he had to make roads, for

there really were none save byways. All discipline had to come from within, and a poet's nature is not one that easily submits to any yoke, though it be a self-inflicted one. He found his own path, with non to guide him. His poetry, first to last, has been sincere, as the work of true poets is. Here he has always been true to his innermost self, moments of freak and writing for writing's sake apart, and therefore, his work abounds in contradictions. A large book has been written, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore.*[71] But he has never had any philosophy, a fact which he acknowledges most rejoicingly. He has had principles and convictions, felt to the roots of his being, but no mosaic of closely-tesselated dogma. He has been poet, not philosopher, and as poet had made a highway through a swamp. He had to find out how far the old Sanskrit poetry was a satisfactory model today, and how far Western models might be followed or naturalised, and had to find new metres. Also, all through his carreer he has never paused in his effort to enlarge his range. Something of this has been indicated in the biographical sketch, but it calls for closer consideration now.

Influences : Vaisnava Lyrists; Kalidasa

First, the question of sources and inspiration arises. It is only in their formative period that great poets have masters. Therefore, though Rabindranath has never ceased to learn, and is as great a thief as any in all literature, it is in the pre-*Manasi* period that we must look for influences. First, of course, are the Bengali Vaisnava lyrists. The poet's own aushority compels this statement, for did he not in the *Bhanu Singh* songs carefully catch their very notes ? And he has never ceased to praise them, has translated them, and always refers to them as his masters. Be it so, then; one must suppose that they are. Yet I have always been rebellious under the importance he ascribes to them, and I believe he does them too much honour. I will say frankly that I am sure they have not influenced him to anything like the extent he has persuaded himself. He is grateful to them because they put him in the way of finding his gift of pure song, and therefore, he is more filial than he need be, mistaking for parents those who are only among his chief teachers. When at length I ventured, foreigner as I am, to drag this conviction to light, I was comforted to find that it was shared, 'numbering good wits,' among them

Prasanta Mahalanobis and also Babu Ajitkumar Chakrabarti, judging by the little space the latter gives to the Vaisnava singers and his stress on other infiuences. Rabindranath's real master has been Kalidasa. He never misses a chance of paying Kalidasa homage, either by explicit panegyric or by the subtler way of paraphrasing or quoting, as Shakespeare does Marlowe :

> 'Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might.
> Who ever loved that loved not at first sight ?'[72]

Frequently, when the strain is ostensibly a Vaisnava one, and the theme is Krishna and Radha, the real mood is not Vaisnava at all, but, as obviously as possible, is Kalidasa's. The two poets, the greatest India has ever produced, differ as strikingly as they resemble each other. The one is the poet of mountains, rejoicing in their strength and vastness. The other is the poet of rivers and of quiet places. But the two between them so completely represent Indian landscapes, that any third poet hereafter must seek some other way to fame. Both are passionate lovers of the rains, and have given us picture after picture of them which is perfect in faithfulness and charm. Both, again, love the gentler beauties of Nature and character; and both are at home in symbolism and mingle with easy grace in the affairs of Gods and Immortals.

Bengali Poetry; Shelley

A very important strain in Rabindranath's work is the influence of folktale and folk-poetry other than Vaisnava. This is responsible for many charming moments, and also for occasional moments of dulness, when it contributes to that cult of the trivial which is the defect of his great quality of interest in the smallest things. The great epics, too, have given him thoughts and incidents that have touched him to fine issues. He is, in spite of the opinion of Calcutta University (on whom be peace !), a very fine Bengali scholar, and there is very little in his own literature which has any value of any sort which has not been taken into his genius. But I think we are justified in placing Western (which means, mainly, English) literature third among formative influences, after Kalidasa and the Vaisnava lyrists. He was called, while in his teens, the Bengali Shelley, and he has translated Shelley, and has acknowledged him as an influence. The *Hymn to Intellectual*

Beauty, he says,[73] was like a transcript of his mind in his youth. 'I felt as if I could have written it.' Shelley has been the favourite English poet of many Indians, and they find an affinity between his genius and that of their own poets. I remember Loken Palit had a theory that Shelley must have known Sanskrit, because he personified abstractions so in the manner of its poetry. He used to quote, with great emphasis,

> 'Be my bride, and sit by me,
> *Shadow-vested* Misery.

Sanskrit or not, those two lines might occur anywhere in *Evening Songs*. Shelley's mythopoea, his compound adjectives, his personifications, his unhappiness, especially his vague, poetical unhappiness,– these things fill *Evening Songs*. Both poets show a remarkable readiness to make offers of marriage to any pleasing ghost that comes their way. In Rabindranath, sometimes it is Misery, sometimes it is Evening, sometimes it is his own heart. Often, it is the Poem which he wishes to woo to himself : 'As day comes, very gently with gentle smiles, and with vermilion on he forehead, to die on the funeral pyre of her husband, in the burning flames of the West; as a dying gust rushes in from sojourn in a strange land towards the forest of its own country, its tired limbs refusing to move, and, as soon as it reaches the grove, dies uttering its last words by the side of its flower-bride ! Even so ! my Poem ! My Bride ! Come, with tenderness manifest in your sad sad face, with tears flowing gently in your eyes !'

I would be hard to find elsewhere such a similarity between two poets of different tongues and civilisations, as this passage shows between Rabindranath and Shelley. The Similarity was a natural one, and not due to imitation of the latter by the former. But it is not strange that at first the Indian should have adored the Englishman. That phase went. 'I have long outgrown that admiration,' he told me.

Other English Poets; Keats and Browning

He never walked the great highways of English literature very systematically. He wandered, often in pretty out-of-the-way meadows. He translated; but not from Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, or Browning. Instead, he translated Christina

Rossetti, Mrs. Browning, Hood, Ernest Myers, and (as already related) Shelley; and not these alone, but Philip Marston and Augusta Webster. Among these names, the translated and the untranslated poets, I venture to pick out four. The delicacy and grace of Mrs. Browning and Christina Rossetti attracted him. But real influence I ascribe to Keats and Browning. From Keats's *Odes* he learnt, is my guess is right, to build up magnificent stanza-forms in his own tongue, by which he enriched it immensely. His stanzas are very many, and carried Bengali poetry far beyond the metres introduced by Hemchandra Banerji. The following lines will give a notion of the stanza in which *Urbasi* is written :

'Like some stemless flower, blooming in thyself,
When didst thou blossom, Urbasi ?
That primal Spring, thou didst arise from the yeast of Ocean,
In thy right hand nectar, venom in thy left.
The swelling, mighty Sea, like a serpent tamed with spells,
Drooping his thousand, towering hoods,
Fell at thy feet !
White as the *kunda*[74]-blossom, a naked beauty, adored by the King of Gods,
Thou Stainless One.'

The *Ode on a Grecian Urn* is a favourite poem with him; and there is evidence that he admired these compact, masterly stanzas very early in his career, and he has certainly made such stanzas at home in his own tongue. But a stronger influence than Keats was Browning. This influence came as he entered upon maturity. It is very marked in the new psychological interest of many poems in *Manasi*, it is present in that first group of non-symbolical plays, it is present most strongly and nobly of all in the short dramatic dialogues of the later nineties, *Gandhari's Prayer*, and *Karna and Kunti*. In his novel, *The Home and the World*, he has made a striking adaptation of the scheme of *The Ring and the Book*, telling the one story through different minds.

But, in the case of a wide and desultory reader like Rabindranath, it is not possible to say where he found the suggestion for this or that idea or phrase. It is enough, that he has 'taken his own where he found it,' and has laid under contribution German,

and French, and Russian literature, as well as Sanskrit and English.

Monotony of Style in Much of His Work

It seems hard to maintain that he is a poet of wide range, in face of so much superficial evidence to the contrary. It must be admitted that he has written a great deal too much, and that the chief stumblingblock in the way of accepting him among great poets is the inequality of his work. There are frequent outcroppings of stony ground, as in a Bengali upcountry landscape. Also, especially in his earlier books, there is a vast amount of flowery undergrowth which needs a sickle or (better still) a fire, to clear the loftier trees and show them in their strength and nobleness. There is a recurrence of a certain vocabulary; of flowers, south wind, spring, autumn, tears, laughter, separation, tunes, bees, and the rest, which sometimes is positively maddening. This sort of thing is most apparent when he is least inspired, but it is by no means absent from his best work. 'In Rabindranath,' said a Bengali to me, 'flowers are always opening, and the south wind is always blowing.' Even in much of the noblest work of his later years, his incorrigible playfulness, the way in which, often when most serious, he will fondle and toss with fancies, spoils some splendid things. In his lectures and addresses, he can never resist the temptation of a glittering simile. Often he dazzles the beholder with beauty when he wishes most to convince. When he should run a straight course, he turns aside. Never was such an Atalanta. From all this comes sometimes a sense of monotony, which hides from the reader the richness and versatility of his work. This is the great weakness of his earlier work, that which finishes with *Chaitali*. One is often surprised, on analysis, to find how much of even his most exquisite work is built upon themes well-worn with him. Never has he expressed more perfectly his wistful sense of loss in the visible world, than in that in that lovely finish of *Urbasi* :

> 'She will not return, she will not return ! That Moon of Glory
>   has set,
> She has made her home on the Mount of Setting has Urbasi !
> Therefore, today, on earth, with the joyous breath of Spring
> Mingles the long drawn sigh of some eternal separation !

On the night of full moon, when the world brims with
  laughter,
Memory, from somewhere far away, pipes a flute that brings
  unrest,
    The tears gush out !
Yet in that weeping of the spirit Hope wakes and lives,
  Ah, Unfettered One !'

Moon, Spring, sigh, eternal, separation, night and full moon, laughter, flute, unrest, weeping, Hope,—these are the old performers, none absent. There is many a passage in Rabindranath when you might call the roll, and, if one of these were present, all the rest would click their heels and answer. Here, in the supreme inspiration of *Urbasi*, they are transfigured into unsurpassable loveliness, which no criticism can touch. Yet, as the flawless idea which lives in Good's presence suffers loss with the judgment of us mortals for the faulty embodiments of that perfection which we see and have made, so even on the best of the poems of his early period some shadow falls memory of the many passage which have their accidents without their essential of inspiration.

Abundance of Natural Imagery

Yet this fault really witnesses to a great strength, his wonderful abundance of imagery. In these early years, had he carried a pruning-knife through orchards, in blossom, their beauty would have shown to greater advantage. But the beauty is there, in wealth that makes the beholder catch his breath. Most of all, wealth of natural illustration. Here we get very close to the heart of his genius, and can confidently claim for him the title of great poet. No poet that ever lived (I shall use this phrase again) has had a more constant and intimate touch with natural beauty. He can use, at his best, the same 'images and pictures, the oldest ones in the world, a score of times in as many lines, and each time with freshness and charm. His wealth here is inexhaustible, and it is as manifest in prose as in verse, and today, after his swift advance in mastery of the tongue, is almost us manifest in English as in Bengali. Let this be noted, then, for it is part of the reason why he is not a small poet, and in this book is not going to be admitted to be one. But a much greater and stronger reason remains, in his treatment of the spirit of natural beauty.

summer heats is another favourite; and he can make the page quiver with its tense, blinding quietness. Spring,—and he can make the page fragrant with *bakul* blossom and musical with bees. Winter he does not care so much about, but has depicted equally well when he chose.

The Jibandebata Doctrine

Secondly, his Nature poetry is closely connected with that characteristic phase, the *jibandebata* doctrine. This doctrine, like most that is most characteristic in Tagore, is a blend of several threads. In it are Indian teaching as to reincarnations and previous births; the revelation of modern science concerning the way in which the strands of all being reach back to dim, hidden beginnings; the findings of psychology; and, binding all and giving them in their union a personal quality of his own, there is the poet's own imagination and inspired guessing. *Jibandebata* means *Life-God*. The *Jibandebata* is the oversoul who binds in sequence the poet's successive incarnations and phases of activity. He is not God; on this, the poet insists. Yet he is more than the poet himself; or, at any rate, more than any one embodiment of the poet. He is the *daemon* of Socrates; is the *Idea* of Plato; is the Quaker's *Inner Light*, considered not as God but simply as the revelation of God. The poet does not sanction our saying that he is any one of these things, yet it is certain that he is all of them. The doctrine dawned on Rabindranath only gradually. Even in *Evening Songs*, the poet is conscious of a voice sounding in his heart which is not just his own voice, yet has affinities with his own voice. In *Morning Songs* is one poem, *The Echo*, which is startling, as what is almost a *jibandebata* poem years before its time. Then in *Manasi* the doctrine begins to take conscious shape, and in *Sonar Tari* and *Chitra* it is the most characteristic thing. It appears strikingly in the dedication-poem of *Chaitali*. Then its sway is practically over, because by its means the poet, when the next stormy and uncertain years are finished and he has leisure for poetry again, has attained to a peace and knowledge of God which make all else fall to one side.

In such a poem as *Swinging*,[77] the poet is seeking an understanding with this strange, beautiful, terrible mistress of his life. That makes the poem intelligible, when before it could hardly have been more than an obscure love-poem set in a atmosphere of

magnificent storm. In other poems, the poet humbly asks the *jibandebata* if he is pleased with him (Rabindranath) and with the revelation of himself that has been made in the poet's work. In yet other poems, he asks, terrified or bewildered, whether the *jibandebata*, is leading him.

It is easy to dismiss all this as poetic fancy, but I can assure the reader that the poet means it seriously. It led to misunderstanding. The poet claimed to an interviewer that at his best he was inspired for a voice that was not simply his own weakness spoke through him. This claim he would make for all true poets, in so far as they are poets. What is weak and poor in his work is his fault: what is good is the *jibandebata's* doing. Dwijendralal Ray[78] accused Rabindranath of setting up as an inspired prophet, the first step towards claiming the honours of avatarhood. The poet replied. D,L. Ray returned to the charge. Rabindranath remained silent. But parties sprang up, those who held with him and those who held with his antagonist Many will think with Ray. Yet surely the poet's intuition was not without reason, when it guessed between this individual life and the Infinite Life some medium which is the sum and whole of whatever imperfect phases and expressions the former may have known and be going to know. Nor, even if this life be the first conscious one, is it unreasonable to suppose that this dumb matter which has been built up from the travail of so long a process has some dim memory stirring of its pre-human days. Thus, the poet often turns to the thought of pre-existence and of recollection from such existence. In some of the most imaginative passages he ever wrote, he turns back in memory to the aeons when the Earth was molten, or when she was a waste of water, and he feels still the fiery breath of those vapours and the mighty roll of that surge.[79] His mind naturally followed with keenness all that science had to teach of those great ages, and the discoveries of his distinguished fellow-countryman, Sir Jagadishchandra Bose, have had no more eager or understanding student. The Earth has never known a son more filial, or one who has knelt to her in more worshipping wise; and this is because he knows that he is breath of her breath, bone of her bone, in soul and mind and memory no less than in body.

Power of Identifying Himself with Nature

From this comes his grestest and most individual gift. No

poet that ever lived has shown his power of identification of himself with Nature. of sinking into her life. T. E. Brown would have rejoiced to know his work. What Marvell imagined—[80]

> 'Casting the body's vest aside,
> My soul into the boughs does glide'—

what Brown imagined—[81]

> 'All that my life has in me wrought
> Of complex essence shall be brought
> And wedded to those primal forms
> That have their scope in calms and storms'—

he has realised in his best worh with absolute completeness.

Power of Merging His Figures with His Landscape

Again, no poet that ever lived has shown such a power of merging not only himself but his human figures with their landscape. Here he is absolutely great, and absolutely original. Sometimes, the minging is a matter of subtle and exquisite perception of the intimate inter-relation between mind and matter. 'But black eyes need no translating; the mind itself throws a shadow upon them. In them thought opens or shuts, shines forth or goes out in darkness, hangs steadfast like the setting moon, or like the shift and restless lightning illumines all quarters of the sky.' Sometimes, it attains to such a haunting picture as that of the lonely, dumb girl at noon; 'in the deep mid-noon, when the boatmen and fisherfolk had gone to their dinner when the villagers slept, and birds were still, when the ferryboats were idle, when the great busy world paused in its toil, and became a lonely, awful giant, then beneath the vast, impressive heavens there were only dumb Nature and a dumb girl, sitting very silent—one under the spreading sunlight, the other where a small tree cast its shadow.'[82]

These Gifts Shown in his Short Stories

This rich, individual gift of his nowhere finds more satisfying expression than in his short stories. Indeed, Ajit Babu goes so

far as to say that most of these are 'written to express single phases'—or, 'moods'—'of Nature.' This is saying too much. The stories, the best of them, are excellent stories. But Ajit Babu's remark does suggest the weakness of the few failures among them, which is that the poet has written as poet or philosopher, and not as story-teller. These we can ignore, while noting the outstanding qualities of the best stories, qualities which put him among the world's greatest short story writers. First among them is their range and variety. This writer or that has surpassed Rabindranath in some quality or other. But where are we to find a writer of stories so different and so good as *Hungry Stones, Living or Dead, Subha, Cloud and Sun, The Kingdom of Cards, The Trust Property, The Riddle Solved,* and *The Elder Sister* ? Four of these eight are of the deepest tragedy, a very unusual feature in an Indian writer; two are of tragedy of a less mixed and absolute kind, but sufficiently poignant, with irony salting the bitterness and with tender laughter softening the pathos; one deals with a realm of sheer phantasy, two are ghostly; several are masterly psychological studies. It is strange that his stories have received so little fame in the West; they are the most under-rated of all his work.

His Irony

Irony is almost the differentia of his stories, being always present. By it the poet supplies the place of comment and chorus to his own action. It is present when Subha's parents sell her, or her dis-appointed husband goes to get another wife; and present when Krishnagopal stands beneath the banian making confession to his son; it is the very woof of *The Skeleton*; it is terrible in that pregnant summary of a whole history of stupid cruelty, at the finish of *Living or Dead*, when Kadambini 'by dying made proof that she had been alive.' It gives edge to stories which were tracts for the times, exposing social evils, with a relentlessness and imaginative force which no pamphlet could attain.

Social Questsions in His Stories

No question has stirred him more deeply or constantly than the position of women. His stories show an understanding of women, as the work of exceedingly few men does. His youth

owed a very great deal to the friendly encouragement and comradeship of his elder brother's wife, whose death was a poignant grief to him; and many of the letters and poems of his Shileida days were addressed to his niece Indira (Mrs. Pramathanath Chaudhuri). His fiercest scorn has flashed out at Hindu society for its child-marriage and cruel treatment of girls who are little more than babies. I remember saying to him that Hindus lost five yeais of childhood in their girls, just when they were most delightful. He replied, 'I quite agree with you, and it is the saddest thing in our lives.' His sympathy and understanding have had their reward. Whatever mistakes his countrymen have made, in following the vogue of this or that third-rate writer, his most intellectual countrywomen have never made any as to where these men stand is letters and where Rabindranath stands. Judging by the many charming and interesting stories by Bengali ladies which have come my way, in book and manuscript, his is the one influence which puts all others into a very cold and deep shade.

The Glamour of Some Stories

Of the poetical beauty of the stories something has been said. I would add to this their glamour. The authors of *The Blessed Damosel* and of *Christabel* would have been glad of the chance of reading *Hungry Stones* or *The Lost Jewels*.

His Novels

His novels deserve more serious notice than can be given here. Two of them are available in English, and their qualities and shortcomings can be appreciated. They will remain the classic pictures of the Bengal of his time. Especially admirable is their detachment, shown, for example, in the remorseles exposure, in *The Home and the World*, of the meaner side of that great anti-Partition movement in which he took so prominent a share. Very few men could have seen and criticised so clearly, and yet have remained convinced partisans. His greatest novel of all, *Gora*. is the greatest novel in Bengali (which almost certainly means in Indian) literature. Its fulness and closeness of observation have been followed by the greatest of Rabindranath's successors, Saratchandra Chatterji, who has expressed to me his intense admiration for *Gora*. The qualities of the short stories can be found in the novels, if not in the same concentration of

beauty yet on a wider field and in fuller study.

His Dramas

It will have been seen that Rabindranath's creative work cannot be divided up, but that poems and fiction must be taken together. His dramatic work similarly refuses to allow of any clear-cut division into prose and poetry. Some of it is witty prose dialogue, as is *Baikuntha's Manucript*; at the other extreme we have the sheer loveliness of *Chitrangada*; and between are dramas and dramatic dialogues of every textuse between prose and poetry. His dramas may be classified in three main groups. There are the *Sadhana* dramas, his best, the best Indian dramas since Sanskrit days. Their beauty, though subtle and variegated, is always clear, and the symbolism does not fog the action. They are vehicles of ideas, powerfully filled with conviction; yet things happen in them, and usually happen rightly and naturally. *Sacrifice*, especially, has shown that it possesses stage-qualities that can make it a success today.

Dramatic Dialogues

The second group are the brief dialogues of the late nineties. The way for these was pointed by *Chitrangada* and *The Curse at Farewell*. *Gandhari's Prayer* is statuesque; *Lakshmi's Testing* is gracious and mocking; *Karna and Kunti* is as tense and moving an interview as any literature possesses. The first and last are classical in theme, and establish their relationship with the great literature of Sanskrit by moments as powerful as any of its own. In *Gandhari's Prayer*, Durjyodhan, who has won by sharp practice and sent his kinsmen into exile, faces his father and mother. He is a Prussian, extolling strength and success. Passion, as commonly in Rabindranath, enters with the women, with the mother, who pleads that her husband renounce their son. He refuses and the Queen is left alone, to voice the wrongs of the uncounted ages. *Karna and Kunti* shows us Kunti, the Pandava Queen, trying to win Karna, the unacknowledged son of her shame, from the Kaurava host. Tomorrow he will die in battle, as he knows well. But when his mother refused to give him his birthright, years before, she set an eternal gulf between the life that is his and the life that should have been his. He remains with the host of his adoption, who trust him. The piece is

beyond praise. *Lakshmi's Testing* gives us a generous queen, a sharp, selfish maidservant, and Lakshmi herself. The Goddess makes the grumbling maidservant a queen. She behaves as might have been expected, and finally spurns the Goddess herself, who comes disguised. There is a quick reversal back to her real estate, as Lakshmi reveals herself, and—Khiri the servant wakes up from her dream, vowing to serve her generous mistress better in future and without complaint for the position which she now sees is the only one she is fit for.

Symbolical Plays

The third group of plays embraces all his later ones. All, including even the playlets which he has written for his Santiniketan boys, sometimes very simply for the youngest boys of all, are symbolical. I find them clouded, with too much 'sob-stuff' in them and often a tiresome insistence on the tremendous significance of the trivial. The life has gone from them, for the symbolism has been a vampire, sucking the blood of action away. Yet all the plays have qualities. Several have been acted with success before select (if not selected) audiences in London and Dublin. *The Post Office*, especially, is a favourite with all Tagorites (if one may coin a horrible word), both in the West and in India. *Phalguni—The Cycle of Spring* —is redeemed by its songs : *The King of the Dark Chamber* by the majesty of the conception which it presents. At least one, *Autumn-Festival*, is just delightful, an open-air frolic. The English reader should remember that it is translations which he is reading.

His Dramatic Gift Never Carried to Fulfilment

I feel that the poet has never realised his possibilities as dramatist. He is a natural dramatist, when symbolism does not strangle his powers. His earlier dramas reached an achievement which he failed to carry to fulfilment. If today he were to return to drama, fighting against his incorrigible tendency to

> 'See the world in a grain of sand,
> And a heaven in a wild flower,'—

a tendency which can become a habit and, like all things in excess, very wearing to others, he might lift himself quite out of the rank of great dramatists—in which *Sacrifice* and *Malini* and *Karna and Kunti* undoubtedly placed him securely for all

time—into the small class of very great dramatists. The Tagorite will demur, that the symbolism is essetial, veritable Tagore. He need not vex himself. Though the poet should fight his sternest against it, enough of symbolism would inevitable enter, to give his work the right Tagore note.

His Songs and Lyrics

His most characteristic and popular work awaits a word. Everyone has heard how his songs have passed into the daily life of Bengal. Here, for once, Mr. Rhys and Mr. Yeats and the others all touch fact. His songs are popular, with a popularity often made boundless by the tunes to which he has set them. 'There is no doubt,' as he said to me, 'that I have conquered my countrymen by my songs. I have heard even drivers of bullock-carts singing my latest and most up-to-date songs. His songs are some fifteen hundred in number, and are of all periods. His latest are better than his earlier, which is strange, since the gift of song is a young poet's gift and leaves most poets as age clogs the current of their blood. His songs are of a grace and lightness that no translation can convey. In them we have the one altogether adequate portrayal of her manifold moods that Bengal has produced.

> 'For every season he has dressings fit,—
>   Spring, autumn, winter, summer,'

If the reader can take his English books, and find the half-dozen lyrics most perfect in grace and suggestion, and then in imagination multiply that grace and suggestion ten-fold, he can guess what these songs are like.

Essentially A Lyrist; Development of Lyrical Form and Range

The basis of his work is essentially lyrical. *Evening Songs* showed, long ago, that a new lyrist had arisen. Their characteristics have been excellently given in Dr. Brajendranath Seal's famous praise[83]—over-praise, as Dr. Seal would admit today, but genuine discernment. Indulgence is due to the enthusiasm of a man who recognises first a new star, of a different kind, in brightness and magnitude, from any already visible in the heavens. He speaks of 'areal fascinations and somnolescences, dissolving phantasms and

sleepy enchantments, twilight memories of days of fancy and fire, ghostly visitings of radiant effulgences, or the lightning-flashes of a Maenad-like inspiration,' which float under the grey skies of evening and are 'transfixed and crystallised for us in many a page of delicate, silver-lined analysis, of subtly-woven, variegated imaginative synthesis,'

Rabindranath has used an immense number of stanzaforms, and has experimented endlessly with metre, is experimenting today. His greatest book, *Balaka*, over thirty years later, shows lyric freedom of *Evening Songs* carried many degrees further, till the metres stream over the page, hither and thither, in the swiftest and most perfect obedience to the poet's dancing mood. And the greatest thing of all is that the freedom goes with the strongest thought that the poet had ever shown. *Balaka* is a great book intellectually, with a never-pausing flow and eddy of abstract ideas. Its imaginative power surpasses that of any earlier book, and moves to admiration continually. In diction, the book completes the merry definance of convention which *Kshanika* had begun.

Religous Lyrics

The beauty of his religious lyrics is adequately presented by the English *Gitanjali*, in such perfect pieces as this :[84]

> 'Day after day, O lord of my life, shall I stand before thee face to face ? With folded hands, O lord of all worlds, shall I stand before thee face to face ?
> Under the great sky in solitude and silence, with humble heart shall I stand before thee face to face ?
> In this laborious world of thine, tumultuous with toll and with struggle, among hurrying crowds shall I stand before thee face to face ?
> And when my work shall be done[85] in this world, O King of kings, alone and speechless shall I stand before thee face to face ?'

Or in such a sublime turn of imagination as :

> 'Thou didst not turn in contempt from my childish play among dust, and the steps that I heard in my playroom are the same that are echoing from star to star.'[86]

Patriotic Poetry

Even his patriotic poetry has very many passages of the truest feeling and noblest expression. Here is the poem whose Bengali title is *Asha*[87]—*Hope*—which we may call *The Poet's Dream* :

'Mother, my sun had set. 'Come, child,' you said:
You drew me to your heart, and on my head
With kisses set an everlasting light.
About my breast, of thorns and blossoms plight,
A garland hung, Song's guerdon,—in my heart
Its pangs burnt deep; your own hand plucked apart
The barbs, and cleansed of dust, and did bedeck
With that rekindled loveliness my neck;
You welcomed me, your son to endless years,

Rising, I lift may heavy lids of tears;
I wake—I see—and all a dream appears.

Greatness as a Lyrist; Urbasi

To show his greatness as lyrist, and as poet, extensive quotation would be necessary. But space is exhausted, so I finish with three stanzas from *Urbasi*, part of which has been quoted already. Urbasi is the heavenly dancer of Indra's court, the type of Eternal Beauty, who in the beginning rose from the sea when it was churned by the Gods to recover the lost nectar of immortality :

'West thou never bud, never maiden of tender years,
O eternally youthful Urbasi ?
Sitting alone, under whose dark roof
Didst thou know childhood's play, toying with gems and pearls ?
At whose side, in some chamber lit with the flashing of gems,
Lulled by the chant of the sea-waves, didst thou sleep on coral bed,
A smile on thy pure face ?
That moment when thou awakedst into the universe, thou wast framed of youth,
In full-blown beauty !
From age to age thou hast been the world's beloved,
O unsurpassed in loveliness, Urbasi !

Breaking their meditation, sages lay at thy feet the fruits of
their penance;
Smitten with thy glance, the three worlds grow restless with
youth:
The blinded winds blow thine intoxicating fragrance around;
Like the black bee, honey-drunken, the infatuted poet
wanders, with greedy heart,
Lifting chants of wild jubilation !
While thou . . . thou goest, with jingling anklets and waving
skirts,
Restless as lightning !
In the assembly of Gods, when thou dancest in ecstasy of joy,
O swaying Wave, Urbasi !
The companies of billows in mid-ocean swell and dance, beat
on beat,
In the crests of the corn the skirts of Earth tremble;
From thy necklace stars fall off the sky;
Suddenly in the breast of man the heart forgets itself,
The blood dances !
Suddenly in the horizon thy zone bursts as under;
Ah, Wild in Abandonment !'

The Western reader can gain little notion of this glorious poem's wealth of allusion, in which Indian mythology mingles with European legends of mermaids and with recollection of the perilous goddess' who was born of the ocean-foam. Neither can he remotely guess at the melody of the splendid, swaying lines, knit into their superb stanzas, or the flashing felicity of diction in such a line as that one :

'In the crests of the corn the skirts of Earth tremble.'

But something of its unflagging glory of imagination should touch him with gladness, something of its wonderful succssion of pictures should unfold before his vision,—enough, surely, to make him see that the man who wrote *Urbasi* producd a world-masterpiece, and merely the most accomplished lyric of India, and won for himself the right to be included among the world's lyric poets.[87]

IV

THE REFORMER AND SEER

His Religious Teaching Later than His Public Activity

No man's life and work fall into comparments. But it is true that it was from political and social activity that Rabindranath passed to educational experiment, and from the last to the peace and poise which mark his religious attitude and are his message today. There never was a period when religion was not a serious matter to him. Nevertheless, in his own words, 'The day was when I did not keep myself in readiness for thee; and, entering my heart unbidden, even as one of the common crowd, unknown to me, my king, thou didst press the signet of eternity upon many a fleeting moment of my life.'[88]

Youth a Period of Impressions and Experiences

At first, as we have seen, his life was one of gathering impressions. Moments of illumination came, notably the one which flooded his mind with happiness in early manhood and produced the most spontaneous of the *Morning Songs*. 'The end of Sudder Street; and the trees on the Free School grounds opposite, were visible from our Sudder Street house. One morning, I happened to be standing on the veranda, looking that way. The sun was just rising through the leafy rops of those trees. As I continued to gaze, all of a sudden a covering seemed to fall away from eyes, and I found the world bathed in a wonderful radiance, with waves of beauty and joy swelling on every side. This radiance pierced in a moment through the folds of sadness and despondency which had accumulated over my heart, and flooded it with this universal light.

'That very day the poem, *The Awakening of the Waterfall*, gushed forth and coursed on like a veritable cascade. The poem came to an end, but the curtain did not fall upon the joy-aspect of the Universe. And it came to be so that no person or thing in the world seemed to me trivial or unpleasing.'[89]

Sudder Street is a dingy, dismal spot, to have given him the illumination which the Himalayas had previously denied.

Rabindranath and the Maharshi

From his father he had a noble inheritance. The *Maharshi* stood out among men by his uprightness and fearlessness, by his stern monotheism and detestation of idolatry, and the fervour of his personal communion with God. His son's mind has shown wider interests, and has been without the sternness. The detestation of idolatry has not been his, for it has been unnecessary. The *Maharshi's* attitude and influence made all question of idolatrous observances for him once for all as dead as they are to any Christian. But the monotheism came to him, with a definiteness that has been overlooked, for all its obviousness.

In Youth, Rabindranath Observant and Critical

The young poet of *Evening Songs* and *Sharps and Flats* was Beauty's worshipper,

'The allotted bondman of her palm and wreath.'[90]

But his were the most observant eyes in Bengal, with a generous heart whose feelings their impressions fed. In his own family circle had been a free, happy life. But he quickly awoke to the fact that the mass of his countiymen lived in a tryanny which at some points challenged comparison with any cruelty that Time has known. What horrible wrongs enlitened men can permit to exist without any protest the history of many lands and periods has shown. Let the Westerner who feels entitled to fling a stone at some Indian evils remember England's penal laws of a century ago, or her representatives' paroxysms of fury in the Indian Mutiny or in Governor Eyre's Jamaica regime, or the savagery of both sides in Ireland, or America's lynching record. Yet good men, men earnest for the reform of humanity and for regligion, have lived in the same age with these things, apparently untroubled. Rabindranath was not one of such. He is not of those

'to whom the miseries of the world
Are misery, and will not let them rest.'[91]

Wrong, and cruelty, I think, do not come home to him as with the stab of personal infliction. But he is one of that not less useful company whose sense of abstract justice is extraordinarily

keen and awake, and who are tormented with the thought of things that ought not to be, by any law of God or good men. His intelligence revolted at the foly which passed often for patriotism with his noisier fellow-countrymen, and attitude, during the first thirty-five years of his life, was chiefly' critical. As the preceding pages have shown, he had a lash of cutting anger, freely plied.

Gradual Growth of His Nationalism; then, Loss of Faith in Nationalism

But the evils which he saw and hated came gradually closely home to him. The land which was cursed by them was his mother. As he looked at them, he seemed, like so many Indian patriots, to find their cause in her helpless condition. If only she were strong and free, she would expel these foul birds from her altars, where they had nested so long poisoning the deepest life of her children. He looked at the West, which seemed so powerful, so organised. As he looked, the secret of her effectiveness seemed to come to him. It was her nationalism. Therefore, he, too, would be a nationalist. Let India become a nation, she would be as strong as these nations overseas. So he entered public life. When a Viceroy, whose many gifts to India were obscured by his habit of giving offence in speech and manner, said publicly that the Bengalis were liars, Rabindranath replied with all his artillery of sarcasm, even analysing those notoriously truthful things, official communications, and quoting their obsequious conclusion, 'Your obedient servant.' A debating score, and one which does not touch the essential question at issue ! But he took up more serious challenges. He unmasked the hollowness and falisity of the Delhi Durbar, a painted shell hiding the poverty of India. He was the heart and soul of the campaign against the Partition. The years of battle brought disillusion. He grew weary of nationalism, which made so much noise and carried with it so few incentives to honesty and unselfishness. What he came to think of it, as a means of salvation, he has shown, in that distillusioned book, *The Home and the World*, and in his book of lectures, *Nationalism*.[92] The latter book is remarkably one-sided and unfair, yet it puts, more powerfully than it has been put elsewhere, the Indian indictment of British rule in his land. The Englishman asks, Is not our rule efficient ? Is it not immeasurably juster and honester than the rules which went before it ? To which the

reply is, Yes. It is just and efficient beyond any comparison with the rule of Mogul or native prince. What is wrong, then? the Englishman asks, bewildered. Rabindranath's *Nationalism* gives him his answer. His rule is impersonal, a matter machinery. Through the very cracks left by their abounding inefficiency, personality percolated, in the days of the old bad rules. Whereas this foreign rule goes its strong, impersonal way, like an instrument of torture,

'exempt itself
From aught that it inflicts.'[93]

It has given them an Emperor seven thousand miles away, and a Parliament which has no time or wish to attend to their affairs.

His Ideas Today as to Nationalism

His ideas are simple and clear enough, though they are expressed with an inexhaustible wealth of picturesque illustration and an angry energy that often defeat their ends, by distracting attention from his theme to its ornaments and accidents. The Western nations to him are robber-nations, organisations for exploitation of the weak. Their government of dependencies is callous and stupid. The Moguls lived in India, whereas the British pass through it for a few years. The Moguls and other former rulers enriched India by art and literature and architecture. The British have given India railway and bridges and bank buildings. The Moguls left the Taj behind them, this epoch will leave the gigantic railway-stations. Its civilisation, he says, is a matter of machinery. 'When this engine of organisation begins to attain a vast size, and those who a mechanics are made into parts of the machine, then the personal man is eliminated to a phantom, everything becomes a revolution of policy carried out by the human parts of the machine, with no twinge of pity or moral responsibility.' The Nation, as the West has evolved it, 'this abstrct being,' rules India. 'We have seen in our country some brands of tinned food advertised as entirely made and packed without being touched by hand. This description applies to the governing of India, which is as little touched by the human hand as possible. The governors need not know our language, need not come into personal touch with us except as officials; they can

aid or hinder our aspirations from path of policy and then pull us back again with the manipulation of office red-tape; the newspapers of England, in whose columns London street-accidents are recorded with some decency of pathos, need take but the scantiest notice of calamities which happen in India over areas of land sometimes larger than the British Isles.[94] More than any other man, he created the national feeling which is today the most obvious fact in Bengal (and, therefore. throughout India). Yet to him nationalism, in his own land and everwhere, is now the enemy, which obstructs all progress and freedom of thought and life. This has been made startlingly clear by his attitude towards the non-co-operation movement, which has been ravaging Bengal student-life; and some of the leaders of that movement have attacked him with almost incredible insolence. He condemns its sterility and negative teaching. His mission in life, he says, is to strive for reconciliation of East and West in mutual helpfulness.

His Honesty and Earnestness

There is this difference between Rabindranath's indictments and much of the wild criticism which has flooded the path of the British Government in India during recent years. He is sometimes unfair, often one-sided; but he is never either liar or fool. His criticism deserves the closet attention, because no man has a stronger sense of fairness. If he says a thing, it is because he is convinced it is true. Prove it false, and he would withdraw it. In the passages I have quoted there is only too much truth, as many an Englishman in India would admit. Those in the Services who are most sympathetic to India know how few there are today in their ranks who have the close knowledge of the people and things Indian which marked many an administrator and soldier in former days. They know, too, how miserably low the standard of knowledge of the vernaculars has become. Anyone can pass the official tests, whether 'Proficiency' or 'Higher Proficiency.' If a man goes further than this, and actually takes an interest in a vernacular literature, he is repaid by an amount of reputation which ten times the labour and knowledge in any subject could not bring in England. The half-dozen Englishman who are interested in Bengali literature today are known by name to many whom they have never met, and their attainments are considered much greator than they are,

His Attitude to the British People

Rabindranath makes a distinction between the British Nation and the British People. 'I have a deep love and a great respect for the British race as human beings. It has produced great-hearted men, thinkers of great thoughts, doers of great deeds. It has given rise to a great literature. I know that these people love justice and freedom, and hate lies. They are clean in their minds, frank in their manners, true in their friendships; in their behaviour, they are honest and reliable. The personal experience which I have had of their literary men has roused my admiration not merely for their power of thought or expression, but for their chivalrous humanity. We have felt the greatness of this people, as we feel the sun; but as for the Nation, it is for us a thick mist of a stifling nature covering the sun itself.[95]

His Generalisations and Sweeping Indictments

It is pardonable for the Englishman occasionally to feel a momentary annoyance at the decision with which Rabindranath sets him and his civilisation and religion to rights. Westeners have in the past been good enough to give the East the benefit of their generalisations on many things. Bolder than Burke, they have not shrunk from indicting a nation. The East has learnt the trick from them; and not Rabindranath only, but many a round-mouthed little lawyer or student will speak with readiness and clearness and fulness about their most complex questions, questions which have puzzled those whose whole lives, and those of their ancestors before them, have been lived close to them. As the West began the game, it must put up with it, Rabindranath, at any rate, might have let fall some word of natural pity for the appalling sorrow and ineffable heroism of these last dreadful years. Fault has been committed, and blame abundant is due. But many of those who suffered were innocent. The fathers are sour grapes, and the children's teeth have been set on edge. Could the poet have carried his memory back to his own mind of twenty years younger, he would have seen the nobler side of all that he hated so, and might, even, have asked himself if his own civilisation, for all the virtues he finds in it, could have shown one-tenth such patience under pain, such willingness to face agony. Nevertheless, he is right in his insistence that the War was a necessary outcome of the horrible state of things in which the whole

West had acquiesced. Is right, too, in his indictment of modern civilisation as material and hard. Here there is a leaven working for better things, and there are many in the West who feel as strongly and deeply as he does. Unfortunately, the curse of modern industrialism, from which the toiling masses of Europe are wrestling to get free, is gripping his India every day more firmly. Not a hundred miles from his beloved Santiniketan, the land is foul with it, the skies are weathed with facthry-smoke, the wayside is piled with slag-mountains. If East and West could combine, each giving where other is poor !

His Views on Social Questions

In domestic politics, has been consistent. Women is different from man, and, therefore, to him the modern outcries to make her equal with man are meaningless. He would have her remain woman, a centre of love and inspiration without which the world is poverty-stricken. But he has never ceased to attack the injustice and cruely which regard woman as inferior, as unfitted for education or the arts. The desolation of so many women's lives by the way in which Hindu society treats widows, the shameful marriage-market of Bengal, the sending away of little girls,—these things he has striven against with all his powers. On another Indian institution, caste he has said, in words, often quoted.[96] 'The regeneration of the Indian people, to my mind, directly and perhaps solely depends upon the removal of this condition.' He says this, while recognising the essential services which the institution of caste rendered in ancient days.

Educational Reformer; Santiniketan

Out of his political activities came his educational ones. The disillusionment and disappointment which resulted from the one were the direct road to other. He himself tells us, 'I seemed choked for breath in the hideous nightmare of our present time, meaningless in its petty ambitions of poverty, and felt in me the struggle of my motherland for awakening in spiritual emancipation. Our endeavours after political agitation seemed to me unreal to the core, and pitifully feeble in their utter helplessness. I felt it a blessing of providence that begging should be can unprofitable profession, and that only to him that shall be given. I said to myself that we must seek for our own inheritance and with it buy

our ture place in the world.'[97] but they are certainly not less true of it in the days of his political energy. Accordingly, in 1901, he founded the Santinketan, beginning with five students only. But his original idea was wider than that of a school, as has been already said. He wnted a home for the spirit of India, distracted and torn in the conflicting winds of the present age. Today, he seeks a home for the spirit of all nations, for his mind is so universal in its sympathies that it can never rest content with a part. That is why he will never be a can-co-operator; he feels too much the need of every part for each. But he began with a school, formed on the model of the old forest-schools of India. The school is now worldfamous. Among its teachers have been artists of reputation such as Nandalal Bose and Asitkumar Haldar, writers such as Ajitkumar Chakrabarti and Satischandra Ray, philosophers such as the poet's eldest brother, Dwijendranath Tagore,[98] and Englishmen such as C. F. Andrews and 'Willie' Pearson.[99] The chief teachers, on whom the poet has placed his main reliance, have been the open spaces around the groves, the trees, dawn and evening and moonlight, the winds and great rains. He believes in the edcation of Nature, by which

'beauty born of murmuring sound'

can pass into character. His own broken and not extensive memory of school-life in childhood was unhappy, Therefore, all through his Santiniketan experiment, he has insisted on one thing, first and second, and all along the line,—on freedom, more freedom, always freedom. The place is hallowed by memory of the *Maharshi,* who found three trees—still extant, and marked by a tablet,—in the midst of a bare, uplifted plain, two miles out of Bolpur, and came here to meditate. There are now noble groves, with abundance of the sweet-flowering shrubs and creepers that India loves. Outside the groves, the great plain stretches away, and here the boys sit on mats on moonlight nights while their own teachers or visitors address them. It is a very notable experience to visit Santiniketan. The air seems charged with solemn, happy thoughts, and purer than elsewhere; and the whole place is filled with joyous faces and voices. The boys play games energetically and well, they discipline themselves by means of their own courts, they have their school-song (written by the poet), their place of

worship (a church of perfect simplicity, open to the breezes), their organisations for tending the sick among them and for visiting villages and conducting night-schools giving elementary education. A very prominent feature of school-life is their dramatic performances chiefly of the poet's own plays. The boys are very perfect mimics. Classes take place in the open-air whenever possible, and a boy sits where he will,—up a tree, if he chooses. The one or two criticisms that occurred to me in my casual acquaintance with the school are too trivial to set down here. What is certain is, that the place is the only school in Bengal which has an idea and a personality behind it.[100]

Difficulty of Maintaining the School

For long enough, the school was run at a loss, and the poet was put to all sorts of shifts to find money for it. Officialdom frowned on it; and ordinary parents fought shy of a school which did not tread the orthodox road to the University examinations, but led its rejoicing students through Bypath Meadow. It was a most effective blow at the school when it was allowed to be understood that its pupils would have no chance of Government service. This was years ago. These difficulties no longer exist.

Religious Atmosphere of Santiniketan

The day begins and ends at Santiniketan with prayer. Boys go round the groves, chanting. This is the morning prayer :

> 'Thou art our Father. Do Thou help us to know Thee as Father. We bow down to Thee. Do Thou never afflict us, O Father, by causing a separation between Thee and us. O Thou self-revealing One, O Thou Parent of the Universe, purge away the multitude of our sins, and send unto us whatever is good and noble. To Theo, from Whom spring joy and goodness, nay, Who art all goodness thyself, to Thee we bow down now and for ever.'

This is the evening prayer :

> 'The Deity Who is in fire and water, nay, Who pervades the universe through and through, and makes His abode in tiny

plants and towering forests—to such a Deity we bow down for ever and ever.'

Rabindranath as Religious Teacher

We come to the matter of our final consideration. Rabindranath as religious teacher and man. This is a question on which no wise man would care to speak at great length or with great positiveness; and the nearer he has been privileged to come to this noble spirit, the less he cares to give definite expression to what he has come to think. Yet no account of Rabindranath, however brief, can pass it entirely by. I have said that he has no reasoned philosophy. His mind is too mobile and sensitive, too glancing and universal.

Is Gitanjali Christian in Tone and Teaching

Some things are obvious. Since I have been critised[101] for saying that it was 'nonsense' to says that the *Gitanjali* represented the teaching of ordinary Hinduism, let me repeat and slightly expand my reply. First of all, it is as plan as can be that his work has none of the outward dress of Hinduism. This is seen to be inevitable, directly one knows the background of his life. At Santiniketan, even the stones cry out, inscribed with texts of austere monotheism. The pillars at the gate prohibit the bringing of idols within or the slaughter of beasts for food or sacrifice. For *Gitanjali*, that exquisite chapbook of mysticism, Indian mythology is exactly what Greek is to a Western poet—a storehouse of illustrations, nothing more. 'The divine bird of Vishnu, perfectly poised in the angry, red light of the sunset,[102] might be the eagle which carried off Ganymede. He uses the popular Indian story of Love in a human form, sporting with mortal girls, uses it repeatedly,—in his earlier poems for the sake of its background of rain-soaked or flowery forest, in his later for its allegory. Yet in his later verse how changed it is from the form in which popular Hinduism knows it ! It has become '*jam pro conscientia Christianus*'; losing its Hindu differentiae, it is one with the Divine Eros of all ages and religions, and the Christian mysticism of any century can parallel even its boldness. But neither idolatry nor mythology forms the battleground. Hinduism and Christianity are at grips in their doctrines of *karma*, life after death, of the nature and character of God. It is hard to see how *karma* can

stand without the doctrine of transmigration as its expression and ratification. Yet surely in *karma* we have Hinduism's most characteristic doctrine. Neither the Hindu *karma* nor the Hindu doctrine of transmigration can be found in Rabindranath. The idea of many incarnations in found in his poetry, and it is hard to say with exactly what intensity of belief it is held in each place. Many poets, and not poets only, have played with the thought, or seriously considered the possibility. Reincarnation, for the Christian as for Rabindranath, is an open question. It may happen. We do not know. But, as for the ordinary Hindu doctrine of transmigration, Rabindranath's words, when asked if the common report was true, that his father in his old age inclined to accept it, are explicit : 'My father never believed in that fairy-tale.' Transmigration is losing its hold on modern Hindu thought. I turn to the question of the life after death, which both Christian and Hindu admit, in their different ways. Many Indian minds crave personal immortality. Ramprasad (eighteenth century) asks, in a passionate lyric, 'What is the use of salvation if it means absorption ? I like eating sugar, but I have no wish to become sugar.' Rabindranath's thought on this question varies. That Christian is unusually fortunate whose belief in survival of death has never known periods of doubt and clouding over. There are passages in Rabindranath's verse which look forward eagerly to what must be a fuller, and, in a real sense, a personal life, if the strong expression are to have any meaning. He has told me that he believes that Buddha's mind has been misinterpreted, and that men went wrong in thinking that he taught extinction of personality, But, as to what Rabindranath himself thinks today, the evidence before me is too conflicting for me to care to pronounce opinion. He is a poet, and a poet has moods. He is a man, and a man must struggle.

Religious Ideas of Gitanjali Overassessed

Before touching on the third point, of the poet's teaching as to be nature and character of God, I wish to digress briefly. The West has formed its impression of his religion chiefly from *Gitanjali*. But one element in the poet's loss of reputation was that men came to see that the religious *ideas* (as distinct from the warmth of personal emotion) of *Gitanjali* had been overassessed. The book's leading thought was of life as *lila*, a thought which

was fresh to the West but commonplace in India. *Lila* is short, in its highest meaning rising into drama of tragic and heroic significance, in its lowest sinking into mere play and laughter. Now all life is *lila*, as Hinduism rightly and nobly insists. But too prevalently in *Gitanjali lila* seems to bear its least worthy meaning. God is the great playfellow who creates flowers of beauty for His children, and death is a momentary interruption of the *lila*. Such a conception of life might produce a lovable and interesting personality, but hardly a strong one.[103] And, indeed, the weakness of *Gitanjali*, on its religious side, and of much of Rabindranath's work, especially his poetry, is its minor tone, its wistfulness, almost its wailing. His father's message had something more robust about it.

Christian Influence in His Work and Life

When *Gitanjali* was published, people found so much in it that resembled the best thought in Christianity, that many concluded that the poet had been greatly influenced by Christianity. Some said, he is really a Christian. But this is equal nonsense with saying that his attitude represented ordinary Hinduism. In my judgment, the direct influence of Christianity on his thought has been very little. His father was the least Christian of all the Brahmo leaders. The poet repelled the suggestion that he had been influenced by Christian thought in writing *Gitanjali* by saying that he had never read the Bible—a confession which helps to explain the remarkable thinness of his essays on Christ. A Christian who wrote on Buddha from casual hearsay and general knowledge would not produce anything very creditable to himself. Further, I am sure that the sterner side of Christian doctrine has made no appeal to Rabindranath. Many Hindus, while remaining Hindus have felt to the depths of their souls the conflict between good and evil which caused St. Paul to cry out, 'O wretched man that I am ! Who shall deliver me from this sinful body of death ?' They have understood, even while not sharing its attitude, why Christian thought has turned so much to the death of Jesus. Rabindranath had his one moment of fleeting sympathy, when that poor Salvationist was beaten and filled up in his body what was lacking of the sufferings of Christ. Then he never felt it again, this sympathy with the side of Christianity which faces suffering and evil-doing. Nevertheless, Christianity is in the air

of India, and Rabindranath has not escaped its influence. What is best in *Gitanjali* is an anthology from the ages of Indian thought and brooding; but it is the sum of Christian influence that has brought these buds into flower. Those who felt, when it appeared, that it was the most hopeful thing that had happened for fifty years. were right, The man who henceforward must rank among the great religious poets of the world did not call himself Christian, and only sheer ignorance of him and of Christianity could claim him as Christian; but in him was given a glimpse of what the Christianity of India will be like, and we see that it will be something better than the Christianity which came to it. The Christianity of India, when it has sloughed its present apathy and mendicancy and poverty of manliness, will help Western Christianity which has made so many mistakes, to know God and Christ better. The Gospels teach a simplicity of life and of access to God which Western Christianity has overlaid. European Christians who live in India do not live uninfluenced by the broad, free spaces, the generous sun, the flooded moonlight. God in Nature becomes a reality, as to Christ amid the Galilean lilies. We can see, and, seeing, rejoice, that Indian Chιistianity will have at least a Vedantist tinge. Rejoice, because we know that once again man will share in the joy which is overflowing the worlds, and that the beasts of the field will be at peace with us. What Western Christianity is charged to carry to India is Christ; and what the ancient religion of India has to gain from Christianity is Christ—not a teacher only, but the Word made flesh, God entering our lives, our poverty and agonies, living as a working man in Eastern bazaars, dying the shameful death of a criminal slave.

The Christian Doctrine of God's Fatherhood

One Christian doctrine has profoundly influenced Rabindranath, and that is the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. If the reader will turn back to the Santiniketan morning and evening hymns, he will sec that, while the latter is Indian in wording and inspiration, the former is Christian, Christian in every phrase. And, whenever Rabindranath mentions Christ, it is this aspect of His teaching which he emphasises. Upon His declaration, 'I and My Father are one,' he builds an interpretation which all Christian exegesis would reject, but he is happy because Christ said the

words. In his more buoyant moods, the Divine Lover or Sojourner of so many wistful images—the traveller who comes at night and vanishes before morning, the boatman who is out in the wildest storm, the player whose flute sounds through the heavy rain and the darkened forest,—becomes his Father, between Whom and His child's spirit there should not fall the least shadow of separation.

Rabindranath and the Vedas and Upanishads and Buddha

The Christian influence is there, then. But the main ground of Rabindranath's religious teaching and belief is Indian, and (still more) individual. It is Indian. It will be remembered that in his earlier phase as poet, he believed in two dogmas, the love and joy of the Universe. He has believed in these to the end, The latter is characteristically Indian. Despite the lesson of that frank, joyous Life lived under the Syrian skies, in the loveliest land of all lands, among the dancing flower-seas of mountain pasture, upon the sunkissed, shimmering waters of a lake, the West has never taken this joy into its belief. A Wordsworth may declare that

' 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.'

But who believes with him ? Not bishop, not Baptist, not Methodist. Perchance a Francis of Assisi holds to this truth, but such an one comes not twice in a thousand years. But to the Indian Joy is as essential to the Universe as all-creating, all-upholding Love itself. So from the *Upanishads* Rabindranath wholeheartedly embraced this doctrine, from the *Rig-Veda* he took freshness of those early Aryan dawns, and, because Christianity's doctrine of the Fatherhood of God chimed with these and with the feelings of his own soul also, he found a place for that; and he has lived by this faith. He believes, too, that all is Love, except man's hasty perversions of God's purposes in Time. From the *Upanishads* he learnt that life should be lived as closely to Nature as possible. Hence, his days have been cool with the breezes that make their way under boughs and through blossoms and his nights have been gentle with moonlight. It was said of Lord de Tabley that he never missed a sunset. Rabindranath cannot have missed much

moonlight. These things have become the very warp and texture of his spirit. To them he has added the teaching of Buddha for whom he has a boundless reverence. Buddha's compassion for all living things, and the wonder of his renunciation, have cast a golden splendour about man's history; and in Rabindranath's thought they have shone again, making his speech glow. He is almost more Buddhist than Hindu. Certainly, he is far more Buddhist than he is in sympathy with many forms of Hinduism that are most popular in his native Bengal.

Rabindranath as a Brahmo

In all this, I have been thinking of his attitude, so far as it could be expressed by any dogma or religion. A word should be added on his connection with the Brahmo Samaj, the church so closely linked with his family and in whose teachings he was brought up.

Nominally, and by inheritance, Rabindranath is a member of the parent body, the Adi Brahmo Samaj. He is a most acceptable preacher, who pours out his whole soul. I shall never forget hearing him in early 1916, when the Brahmos were celebrating their centenary. He seemed almost tranced in adoration and meditation, as his voice went quietly and tensely through his prayer and address. The Jorasanko courtyard was crammed up to the galleries all round it, and everyone was watching that still, absorbed figure. After such services, he is exhausted, and empty of all nervous energy.

Today he rarely attends a service, unless he is himself the preacher. His failure to break down the conservatism of the Adi Samaj, in a matter on which he feels so strongly as he does on caste,—an episode referred to at some length in the second chapter of this book,—may have chilled his attitude towards a body which seemed cold and unprogressive. His sympathies are now rather with the *Sadharan* Samaj,[105] which is the most vigorous branch of the Brahmo Samaj, numbering in its members a remarkable proportion of influential and well-known men. The Sadharan Samaj has this year elected him an honorary member.

He has told me that he does not like missionaries, whether Christain or Brahmo, as he regards them as narrow-minded. He objects to dogmatism and propagandist work. Yet, if pressed, he would not deny that a man who cares greatly about truth that he

has found is morally bound to try to bring it to others—which is the sufficient justification for all missionary work, whether Christian or Brahmo, Buddhist or Moslem. A man who is a missionary for such a reason has place in his mind or attitude for arrogance or patronage, but should be humble and anxious to serve, willing to learn, respecting all men everywhere. So Rabindranath has found some of his best friends among both Christian and Brahmo missionaries, and admits the unselfish usefulness of the best among these. And, thought he prefers to regarded as a theist in the broad sense and shrinks from labels which suggest any sort of separatism, he would not deny that the Brahmo Samaj has been very important among the formative influences of his life. He belongs to the Hindu civilisation; but he is unmistakably Brahmo, in his strong, clear theism, and his insistence on personal relationship with God as the thing that matters The teaching and attitude of *Gitanjali* would never have surprised the West as they did, if the hymns of the Brahmo Samaj had been known. These hymns have not received the notice they deserve, as influences in his religious poetry. He himself has written some hundreds of hymns. It is mainly through the Brahmo channel that the abundant Chritian influence in his life thought has been mediated.

His Religion : Personal Experience, not a Theology

But, when all is said, and said haltingly, and uncertainly, the essential thing remains to be said. What matters in him is not what he may set before his audiences or readers as his doctrines, but his personal experience of God. Of the depth sincerity of this no one who has read *Gitanjali* can doubt. God is strangely close to his thought. He is often more theistic than any Western theist. This has always struck me as the least-noted and yet the most remarkable thing in his religion, this way in which God becomes more personalised for him, the Indian, in the most intimate, individual fashion, than He does for the ordinary Christian. This is not Vedic, not Vedantist. I can only assume that he found it so in personal experience, that neither flesh nor blood revealed it to him but, our Father in Heaven. 'My cup has been emptied,' he cries, in a letter to me, 'and I must run for dear life to the one living stream I know that flows in the depth of solitude.' He is a poet, and his mind is restless, and passes through moods of the

darkest depression. All his life has been a conflict. Hence the troubled undertone of his religious work. It is the crying of the poet within him, of the eternal child. The world has wounded him, effort has drained, results have disappointed. While life remains, this note will never be silent. Yet beneath all he has a calm and a poise of spirit, which knows many seasons of uninterrupted rest fulness.

Personal Characteristics : His Significance for Our Time

I suppose a word should be said as to personal characteristics. He is the most interesting of companions, witty and alive to every thought that rises. His gentleness and courage, his consideration, the dignity and nobility of his features, all combine to make up a personality whose fascination posterity will not be able to guess. This man, remarkable in himself, is still more remarkable as a prophecy of what is to be. After the farce of education and the tragedy of character, let us take hope, all of us who aspire to be counted among men of good will, patriotic Indian and sympathetic Englishman alike. Through him, we can believe that the end of this mingling of East and West will be good and not evil, Of that intermixture, and its results, men have seen enough that was hideous and depressing. But in *Gitanjali* came a result which was only lovely, a book that will stir men as long as the English language is read. We may feel that in such books and such a man we have the earnest that the enmity of East and West will be reconciled, that the mysterious destiny which has thrown a handful of northern islanders upon these ancient peoples will be justified. Both may believe that some better thing has been provided for them than aught either has yet experienced, that apart from the other neither could be made perfect. Neither he nor we have entered into the greatness of our heritage. Yet, in the words of F.W.H. Myers, 'we may trust and claim that we are living now among the scattered forerunners of such types of beauty and of goodness as Athens never knew.'[106]

Notes and References

1. *Nauclea kadumba.*
2. There are other stories of his disappearance.

3. Worship of the Motherhood of God, of Strength. Identified with the goddess Durga.
4. Author of *Chandi*. *Kabikankan* means 'Gem of Poets.'
5. Correctly Srirampur.
6. He took the name, *Michael*, on becoming a Christian.
7. Custom has by now prescribed this spelling, *Brahmo* for *Brahma*; and, invertedly, a long o sound has come into the Bengali pronunciation, though not into the spelling.
8. Or, *Great Sage*.
9. Henry Vaughan, *To His Friend* (in *Olor Iscanus*).
10. Introduction to *Twenty-five Collotypes*.
11. The Calcutta quarter where the Tagore family-house is.
12. *My Reminiscences* (translation, p. 122).
13. *Ibid.*, p. 196).
14. *Ibid.*, p. 45).
15. *Shorea robusta*.
16. *Butea frondosa*.
17. *My Reminiscences* (translation, p 134 seq.).
18. Kalidasa's work is an exception to the truth of this statement.
19. P. 156 seq.
20. *My Reminiscences* (translation, p. 179).
21. Preface to *Endymion*.
22. This edition groups poems regardless of chronology. It is useless to the serious student
23. *My Reminiscences* (translation, p. 242).
24. Mr. Prasanta Mahalanobis.
25. Shall we say 'Mist-Maidens' ?
26. The Bengali word is used to mean both *fancy* and *imagination*.
27. *Duranta Asha*.
28. *Rabindranath*, p. 31. Ajit Babu quotes the phrase from *Duranta Asha*.
29. *Rabindranath*, p. 31.
30. *Meditation*. The *Sadhana* magazine must be distinguished from the book of English lectures entitled *Sadhana*.
31. Mr. Prasanta Mahalanobis.
32. A part-translation is published as *Glimpses of Bengal*. For the translation of the quoted passage here I am responsible.
33. Quoted by Ajit Chakrabarti, with his usual gift of appositeness.
35. *Cf.* Keats's famous letter to Shelley (August, 1820) : 'I received a copy of *Cenci*, as from yourself, from Hunt. There is only one part of it I am judge of—the poetry and dramatic effect, which by many spirits nowadays is considered the Mammon. A modern work, it is said, must have a purpose, which may be the God. An artist must serve Mammon; he must have "self-concentration '—selfishness, perhaps. You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore.'
36. Whittier, *The Eternal Goodness*.
37. Dr. Johnson's *Letter to Lord Chesterfield*.
38. See pp, 74 seq.

39. Translated in my *Poetry of Rabindranath Tagore.*
40. T.E. Brown, *Epistola ad Dakyns.*
41. *Rabindranath*, pp. 55 seq.
42. Drudgery is far too strong a term, of course, for his Shileida work.
43. Thomas Carew, *Ingrateful Beauty Threatened.* He writes '*her* veils'.
44. Not quite everything. The later pieces are wistful.
45. See Mr. Birrell's *Matthew Arnold* (*Obiter Dicta*).
46. *Rabindranath Tagore* (Macmillans).
47. *Rabindranath*, p. 69 (Ajitkumar Chakrabarti).
48. Matthew Arnold, *The Last Word* and *Pis-Aller.*
49. The first Bengali month, mid-April to mid-May.
50. Matthew Arnold, *Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann.'*
51. Many Indian Universities are at present trying to remedy things, and the future is much more hopeful.
52. See the middle poems of *Fruit-Gathering.*
53. *Rabindranath*, p. 96.
54. Matthew Arnold, *Requiescat.*
55. *Adi* means *primitive, original.*
56. Minister.
57. Plattorm.
58. For these details, I am indebted to Mr. Prasanta Mahalanobis.
59. In a letter to me.
60. In a newspaper review of Mr. Rhys's book.
61. The Ten Directions—i.e., the eight points of the compass, with the zenith and nadir—are represented in Hindu mythology as ten delties and their consorts. Here they are all visualised as one unseen, sleeping Sky-Beauty.
63. For translations of many *Balaka* poems see *Fruit-Gathering*, especially its last pieces.
64. The proposed editors were Jadunath Sarkar (History and Politics), Pramathanath Chaudhuri (European Literature), Ramendrasundar Tribedi and Prasanta Mahalanobis (Science); with the poet as general editor.
65. No one now uses it, except his publishers.
66. This had become so much his new organ of expression that Ajit Babu suggested the name '*Sabuji-Patra* Period' for this latest phase of his work (now, latest phase but one). *Patra*, like the English *leaf*, means either *leaf of a tree* or *leaf of a book.*
67. It is discovering them now.
68. Bengali *Basu.* Bose, like Tagore, Banerji, Chatterji, Mukherji, is an anglicised form.
69. This sequel is omitted from the present text of *Manasi.*
70. In his home.
71. By Professor Radhakrishnan (Macmillans). 'Till I saw that title,' said an old distinguished 'friend of the poet, 'I did not know he had a philosophy.'
72. *As You Like It.*
73. In conversation with Mr. Mahalanobis.
74. A jasmine.
75. The serpent who upholds the earth.
76. The eight points of the compass, the zenith and the nadir.

77. *Jhulan* (*Sonar Tari*); see No. 82 in *The Gardener.*
78. The popular dramatist and song-writer.
79. See poems in *Sonar Tari* and *Chitra.*
80. *The Garden.*
81. *Epistola ad Dakyns.*
82. *Subha* (*Mashi and Other Stories*).
83. *New Essays in Criticism*, p. 75.
84. No. 76.
85. An Englishman would have written 'is done,' Cf. what I said as to tiny slips in his English.
86. No. 43, *Gitanjali.*
87. *Kalapana.*
88. A complete translation of *Urbasi*, as also of *Sea-Waves*, *Dharma-Prachar*, and other pieces referred to in this book, will be found in my forthcoming *Poetry of Rabindranath Tagore* (Oxford University Press).
89. *Gitanjali* (English, No. 43).
90. *My Reminiscences* (translation, pp. 217-18).
91. D.G. Rossetti, *Soul's Beauty.*
92. Keats, *Hyparion, a Vision* (the second draft of *Hyperion*).
93. Indignant Bengali Nationalists ascribed his changed views (a matter of years before !) to his knighthood. Browning's *Lost Leader* was freely applied to him.
94. Shelley, *Cenci.*
95. *Nationalism*, p. 13.
96. *Nalionalism*, pp. 16-17
97. *Letter to Mr. Myron H. Phelps* (*Modern Review*, August, 1910 February, 1911).
98. *Introduction* to W. Pearsons' *Shantiniketan*, p. 2.
99. Though not a teacher on the staff, he has lived near the school for a quarter of a century, and is one of its formative influences.
100. To whom the poet dedicated *Balaka*, in eight playful, affectionate lines.
101. For a fuller account, see W. Pearson's *Shantiniketan.*
102. In Professor Radhakrishnan's *Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore.*
103. *Gitanjali* (English No. 53).
104. For this criticism I am indebted to the Rev. E. W. Thompson, M. A., formerly of Mysore.
105 *Sadharan* means *common* (*i.e*, here, *universal* or *democratic*; almost, *Catholic*).
106. *Greek Oracles.*

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A TRIBUTE TO TAGORE

G. RAMA CHANDRAN

Memories, priceless beyond all words, illumine my mind. In this moment[1], not of sorrow or pain, but of wonder and perplexity, these memories come upon me and envelop me like streams of light. I will not shed a tear. I will not give a sigh. That today will be unforgivable profanity. It is not sighs and tears that the great passing away of Gurudev calls forth from us. That is the common thing every common death calls for. But Gurudev was not a common man. He did not live a common life. He has not died a common death. In the *Gitanjali,* several years ago when life was yet young with him, he had asked himself, "What will you offer to Death when Death comes and knocks at your door ?" He had answered with marvellous and noble vision, "Oh ! I will place before him the full and overflowing vessel of my life. I will never let him go with empty hands." And now in his eighty-first year with the whole world as his witness he has literally kept his word to death, that tremendous and inescapable fulfilment of all truly great lives. To most, death is only an end. It is a mere cutting-off. It is darkness after light. But to those like Rabindranath death is nothing but a resplendent fulfilment. For such, it has no sting whatever. Death comes to them like fruitioning after flowering. The flowering may be full of enchanting scents and equisite colourings, but in fruitioning is the more precious and real substance of fulfilment. Gurudev has died only to be deathless. They say he is dead. I say he cannot die. Death as we ordinarily understand it stands defeated. Death as he understood

it, as the friend and the fulfilment of life, stands proud and thrilled at the gift of immortality laid in its hands. "I will place before Death the full vessel of my life." He has now done that. Not a small, little, penurious, undeveloped or unrealised life has he now placed in the hands of death. But a mighty, indescribably rich, varied and noble, fully-grown, all-round, perfectly fulfilled and radiant life has he placed before Death. Is it any wonder then that Death itself stands awestruck and humbled before the burden of blazing light it must now carry for ever in its hands. Therefore, let us not weep or sorrow as for a common death. Let us rather rejoice. Let us be thankful that such a man lived so greatly in our time and has died in such a magnificent fulfilment. Let us understand at last what a fraud is the common concept of death and its terrors. Let us burn to ashes the earthly body from which the breath has fled, and scatter the ashes to the sun and the winds, knowing that each atom of it will leap up again like flaming torches, like great beams of deathless light. Let us then ignore death. Let us remember Gurudev's vast and incalculable legacies of dreams and thoughts and the countless forms of beauty he created in word and song, and the innumerable achievements in which he will live for ever. Not in some heaven or other unknown and unknowable place will he live for ever. He will live deathlessly here and in this great world, under this vast sky which he loved in all its moods and tones, in the midst of this endless and radiant Nature which he read like an open book, and above all in the minds of the millions of men and women who owed so much of their joy and their understanding to him, and in the minds of their children and children's children.

Every great man has his own special background which is partly historical and partly his own creation. It is against such a special background alone that we can see him at his best and greatest. For Rabindranath also there was such a vital background. That was Santiniketan. It was there that he blossomed to his fulness. It was there that his poems and songs rose in an increasing symphony of immortal beauty and immortal truth. It was there that he wove the patterns of his dynamic philosophy of the unity of mankind, cutting across every obstacle of race, nation, creed and caste. It was there that his vision of the Visva-bharati was born and nurtured. It is there that his ashes will now rest in peace for ever.

There is in Santiniketan a *sal*-avenue. It is to that avenue my mind runs today. There, from the eastern end comes a royal figure. Not in any kingly robe or in any external decoration does the kinglinesss lie. It is there in his tall and majestic figure. Some Roman or Mughal emperor might have had such a figure He approaches in simple flowing robes which cover him from head to foot. His hair is snow-white, and yet his gait is unbent and his walking firm. His hands are held behind his back. Even from the distance his broad brow rises like a great marble dome crowned by the Himalayan snows of his great shining eyes and his nobly moulded Aryan nose. There is such serenity flowing from him, such peace and self-possession, that you ask, "Is it some *maharsi* of old, re-risen, who is approaching ?" And as he approaches slowly, you see a smile lighting up his whole face, his eyes glowing like stars. Boys and girls of Santiniketan greet him with bowed heads and folded hands. He has a smile and a kind word for everybody. But the little children do not stand away in reverence like the elders. They run to him shouting, "Gurudev !" and cluster round him in utter childlike irreverence. With the children he will crack joke after joke. There arise peals of laughter from among them in which his voice is that of the most glad-hearted of children. They lay hands on his robes and pull him till he consents to sit somewhere with them in the shade of some spreading tree. They ask him questions. He gives them answers which make them break into fresh peals of laughter. Then suddenly there is silence, for he is telling them a story of singing them a song. It is a magic circle. It is the Eden of children. Elder students and other men and women of Santiniketan come and sit around, a little behind the children, and seeing them he will say laughingly, "Why are you here, you old people ? This is our, the children's durbar." He was so much one of them !

Day after day he has come walking in serenity and in beauty down that *sal*-avenue, Day after day we used to greet him there and touch his feet and feel ennobled. That *sal*-avenue was so full of him in those great days. Those trees can never forget him. They will miss him.

It was once a rainy day. There are no class rooms or lecture halls worth the name in Santiniketan. The classes one morning

started in passing sunshine. A class of little children was going on in the grove behind the library. The rain gently started without warning. The children did not want to break up the class. The teacher was hesitating. Suddenly there was an uproarious voice coming from the side of the library. Rabindranath was approaching with an armful of umbrellas, shouting, "An umbrella for a song, an umbrella for a song !" The children broke up the class at once. They ran to him joining in the fun. Gurudev had come to the library in the morning and seeing the rain start had gathered all the umbrellas in the library verandah without asking anybody's permission. And yet, it is this same glad-hearted and child-souled poet and prophet who has also given us the profoundest philosophy, and sorrowed deeply over the many tragedies of modern civilisation. This was twenty-one years ago.

Those were the first years after the Visva-bharati University was started at Santiniketan. Most of us, the first batch of students, were non-cooperators from various Government schools and colleges. Most of us were *khadi*-clad "Gandhi fanatics". I was the head of the gang in those days. Gurudev had written some vigorous criticism of the Non-cooperation programme in the pages of the *Modern Review*. We were much agitated over it. We were sure Gurudev was wrong and Gandhi right. We argued and shouted. Our classes became full of these wordy discussions. We made a nuisance of ourselves. The peace of Santiniketan was much disturbed by these controversies conducted with much heat. There was also of course a strong student group supporting Gurudev's views. One day I suddenly got a message from Gurudev. Professors had told him that I was leading the opposition. The message was to the effect that Gurudev was glad that plenty of discussions were going on, but that he preferred to have some light along with the heat of controversy, and that, therefore, he would advise a full debate, and that he also would attend the debate gladly. I confess I felt a little nervous. In any other institution I would perhaps have been suspended or even dismissed. But our Guru was asking for further and fuller discussion ! That was his way with students. A big debate was arranged. Every student in Santiniketan attended. A motion was tabled : "In the opinion of this house Mahatma Gandhi's programme is the right one for India". I moved it before a crowded house. Our side let loose a flood of oratory. So did the other side. The late Sri Kali

Mohan Ghosh thundered at us and defended the views of Gurudev with great vigour. Votes were taken. We won. Gurudev was all the time sitting apart, behind the students. He appeared to enjoy the debate very much. He joined in the applause for and against the motion whenever it broke forth from the students. After the votes were taken Gurudev asked for permission to speak. And he spoke. When he spoke it was all light and no heat. He prefaced his talk by saying that the debate had given him great joy. "This Santiniketan will fail if it fetters your minds or makes you fear ideas. Even if every one of you hold an absolutely different view from mine, even so Santiniketan will still be your home. It will shelter you. Today is the day of my victory because my students have said today freely and bravely that I am hopelessly in the wrong. I do not admit that I am wrong. But I want you to have the courage to say so, if that is your conviction. May Santiniketan always give you that freedom and courage !" He spoke for an hour. He pleaded against fanaticism. He did not admit that non-cooperation would succeed. It was too negative. It had possibilities in certain directions. But it was tending towards the same narrow nationalism which in Europe had made civilization into a mockery. It was impossible to reject entirely the progress of industrialism, which was like a force of nature. Industrialism could and ought to be controlled but it cannot be erased. Mere asceticism will not lead to freedom. Freedom demanded clear understanding of objective realities and not only of moral values. Mahatma Gandhi was undoubtedly the greatest moral force in India, and hence the greater need to guard against his moral dictatorship.

Rightly did Mahatma Gandhi call Gurudev the "Great Sentinel". What nobler or more courageous sentinel of the human spiris has India produced since Gautama Buddha, 2500 years ago ! Gurudev's final words that night still ring in my ears. "Do not accept anything because I say so or because it is my view. Wrestle with these problems with your own power of reasoning. You must fearlessly reject my view if your reasoning does not agree with mine. That I am the head of this institution gives me no right to enforce my ideas on you or to curtail your mental freedom. It is my duty in Santiniketan to guard the freedom of your mind as the most precious thing in the world. That is the mission of the Visvabharati." Let us think for one moment of the thousands of gurus all the world over seeking to bend the mind and will of

others to their own mind and will through fear and coercion of every kind, and let as think also with our heads bowed in love and reverence unutterable of this great Gurudev who taught us that the value of the freedom of the human mind was the greatest value under the sun. Never in my life have I known a man with greater moral courage than Rabindranath. He had openly joined issues with Mahatma Gandhi on momentous occasions when the whole nation was being swept away by the magic of that super-man's resistless faith and matchless *karma yoga.* From his place as the "Great Sentinel" Rabindranath has protected the freedom of the mind in India against every attack.

There is one other memory which will also be of value. One of the last things I did before I left Visva-bharati was to read a paper entitled "Gandhi and Tagore". That paper contained the synthesis which I had built up in my own mind of Gandhi and Tagore after careful and prolonged study of both. The meeting took place in Uttarayana. Gurudev was also present. I think Dr. Formichi of the University of Rome, who was then in Santiniketan, presided. After I read my paper Dr. Formichi complimented me and turning to Gurudev asked, half jocularly and half seriously, "Now Gurudev, what have you to say on the paper ?" Gurudev smiled and said, 'Ramachandran has spoken of two persons, Gandhi and Tagore. Of the first I claim to know something, and of the second so little that I dare not speak about him. The Upanisads have said that he who knows himself knows everything. I know very well that I do not know everything. It follows, therefore, that I do not know myself." There was a round of laughter. Gurudev's sense of humour was something wonderful and his great voice would sometimes roll across Santiniketan in laughter of undiluted gladness and good humour.

I will close with the last conversation I had with him in his beautiful little mud-hut in Santiniketan, more beautiful than the palaces of kings, and yet simple like a hermitage. It was in 1939. I was on a visit to Santiniketan after several years. He asked me about my work. I told him that I had taken a plunge into politics, and gave him the story of the struggle for political freedom in Travancore. He said to me, "I always knew you could not keep away from these struggles. In a sense they are vital. In this new era in India our struggle is no longer for individual liberation

only. It is also for social liberation, but these are not contradictory. One cannot exist without the other. That is the secret we must now learn. In the struggle for collective freedom, however, let us do nothing which will kill individual freedom. I am a profound admirer of Soviet Russia, but I have a fear that individual freedom does not as yet blossom there. In your politics, never stop to a lie. Never dishonour the man in us and never take a short cut to victory. Victory is nothing. But we must reach victory with honour, through honour. Put your trust in men, and not only in programs. Our great leader in India, Mahatma Gandhi, is right there. We must win only through pure and honourable methods. There are two things you must carry with you everywhere as an old student of the Visva-bharati, Never give up your freedom of mind to friend or foe. Keep the windows of your mind open and free. Fanaticism is death to the human mind. And secondly, never think of any man, however, little he might appear, as anything less than a man, a member of the great community of mankind, and never, never, as the member of a caste or a community or a nation or a race."

NOTE AND REFERENCE

1. This article was written upon the passing away Rabindranath Tagore, away back in 1941, undet the title, "A Student's Memories of Gurudev", when the Editor was in gaol for participation in the *satyagraha* movement under Gandhi.

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TAGORE AND GANDHI : THE POET AND THE PRAGMATIST

DAVID W. ATKINSON*

In his history of India, Jawaharlal Nehru refers to Rabindranath Tagore and Mohandas Gandhi as "the most outstanding and dominating figures in the first half of the twentieth century."[1] Despite this assertion of common greatness however, Tagore and Gandhi were very different people who rarely agreed with one another. Tagore was "the aristocratic artist,"[2] who represented that side of Indian tradition celebrating the fullness of life. Gandhi was "a man of the people,"[3] who embodied the "renunciation and asceticism"[4] of Indian tradition. These differences of personality and attitude are nowhere more evident than in how Tagore and Gandhi felt about Indian Nationalism. While Gandhi saw the political freedom of India as necessary to a revived Indian culture and society. Tagore criticized Indian Nationalism as a vehicles of powers destructive to the diversity of Indian identity. But this divergence of political and social views is based on a yet more fundamental difference in religious perspective, even though both men saw themselves as squarely within the Hindu tradition. Gandhi was the "practical idealist" who subsumed religious differences to the Divine and who recognized how human limitation conditioned man's spiritual life. Tagore was the "romantic idealist," the poet and artist, who recognized no human limitations, and who saw man's spiritual life as an eternally dynamic

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thing in which man forever grows in an expanding apprehension of the Divine.

Given their lifelong debate concerning India's future, the close relationship between Tagore and Gandhi is remarkable.[5] Their friendship began in 1915 when Nobel prize winner Tagore offered Santiniketan's hospitality to the relatively unknow Gandhi,[6] and it only ended with Tagore's death in 1941. Gandhi spoke of Tagore as the "Poet of the World" whose "poetic genius and singular purity of life has raised India in the estimation of the world,"[7] Tagore similarly extolled Gandhi's "creative will" by which "he assumed the tremendous responsibility of leading the whole country into freedom."[8] It was Gandhi who referred to Tagore as *Gurudev* or "divine teacher," and Tagore who first called Gandhi *Mahatma* or "great soul," What each man recognized in the other was a deeply felt religiosity pervading all aspects of life. So, just as Gandhi, the politician and social activist, wrote, "You cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into water got compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity,"[9] Tagore, the poet claimed, "My religious life has followed the same mysterious line of growth as my poetical life. Somehow they are wedded to each other."[10]

Although Gandhi and Tagore tried to play down their differences, they were successful to only a limited degree, as Gandhi was disappointed more than once in trying to gain Tagor's support for his non-cooperation movement. The central disagreement they never resolved was Tagore's insistence that "we have no word for Nation' in our language. When we borrow this word from other people, it never fits us."[11] This stands in striking contrast to Gandhi's unshakable belief in *swaraj*, which demanded an independent India struggling to realized "an inward-looking vision of traditional Indian society, purified and cleansed."[12]

Gandhi's idea of *swaraj* has, of course, been throughly analyzed, even though his own definition remainas irritatingly vague. Taken from the Sanskrit *swarajya* meaning "self government,"[13] *swaraj* has much in common with other twentieth-century preocupations with self-determination, standing for political independence, freedom from economic exploitation, and government by popular consent of the people.[14] But *swaraj* went beyond politics, Gandhi describing it as "the consciousness in the average village that he is the maker of his own destiny."[15] Freedom for

India, Gandhi insisted, requires freedom for the individul; as he wrote, "the outward freedom that we shall attain will only be in exact proportion to the inward freedom to which we may have grown at a given moment."[16] *Swaraj* was not simply the end of British rule : it was the individual's complete emancipation from any oppression. In his own words, Gandhi was not interested 'in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke."[17] He knew that the relationship between political emancipation and individual freedom was reciprocal. Individual freedom world never be relaized unless the persuasiveness of collective will could be brought to bear on the British. Similarly, the independence of a nation representing traditional Indian values required that each individual free himself from the domination of a foreign culture.

At least intially it seemed that Tagore's attitudes and views did not differ substantially from Gandhi's. As early as 1904, Tagore held protest rallies, spoke out against English exploitation of India, and actively supported the boycott of English goods. He also advocated social programs designed to improve the living conditions of oridinary Indians and to bring about understanding between Hindu and Muslim. Anticipating Gandhi, Tagore argued that poverty would only be eliminated by establishing the village as the centre of society, reviving cottage industries, and bringing under control the wasteful extravagance of traditional Indian ceremonialism.[18] But as the impetus for an independent India grew, Tagore became increasingly disillusioned, expressing concern about political factionalism and growing disagreement between Hindus and Muslims. He saw that the forces of nationalism were themselves becoming coercive, separating one group from another, and forcing people to accept ideas and values in the name of patriotism. Alienating hemself from many who hand previously looked to him for direction, Tagore expressed disapproval of what he saw as an out-of-control movement that was destructive of India's unity.

These concerns were most eloquently discussed in their essays published in 1917 : "Nationalism in the West," "Nationalism in Japan," and "Nationalism in India." In the first of these essays, Tagore was concerned with way the concept of nation, which he called one of the worst products of the west, reduces all individuals to a mediocre sameness. "The national machinery," he wrote,

"turns out neatly compressed bales of humanity. . . bound in iron hoops labelled and separated off with scientific care and precision."[19] Tagore's point was that a single goal uniting all men in their aspirations constitutes the lowest common denominator. This is not to say that Tagore failed to recognize society's importance to the individual. Rather he saw society evolving as a natural, unplanned response to man's social needs. It should be "a spantaneous self expression of man as a social being," which while allowing individuals "to develop ideals of life in cooperation with one another," never thwarts man's individual needs.[20]

For Tagore, to be concerned with national identity is to be preoccupied with power. This power is not just the power to mold individuals into a single whole, but the power which the modern state aspires to exercise over other nations. It is the setting of one nation against another, the goading of "neighbouring societies with greed of material prosperity, and consequent mutual jealously and by the fear of each other's growth into powerfulness."[21] Such a situation produces animosity which can never attain "the final spirit of reconciliation."[22] It is this animosity, moreover, which removes moral responsibility from human affairs. Love, brotherhood, and concern for the other are replaced by a jingoism in which one nation treats all other nations as potential enemies and "tries to thwart all symptoms of greatness outside its own boundaries."[23]

It was with considerable foresight in 1917 that Tagore, even while admiring Japan for overcoming its cultural inertia, expressed reservations about the country's rejuvenated national identity. Tagore praised how Japan had "come out of the immemorial East like a lotus blossoming in easy grace, all the while keeping its firm hold upon the profound depth from which it. . .[had] sprung."[24] Yet he recognized in Japan's new nationalism the "organized ugliness [that] storms the mind and carries the day by its mass."[25] This "organized ugliness," Tagore feared, would destory Japan's true genius, which was found in achieving harmony with nature and not mastering it, in allowing things to evolve as they are naturally intended and not according to some way deemed best by man. He perceived well the root of Japan's sense of unity : the desire for harmony and not supermacy, "an extension of the. . . obligations of the heart in a wide field of space and time."[26] And he feared that this would be lost, that by becoming powerful

through adopting western methods, Japan would exhaust "her inheritance" to be left with "only the borrowed weapons of civilization."[27] By pursuing a path which led to imperialism, Japan would lose what it had most to give the world.

Such observations about Japan anticipated Tagore's concerns about India, that nationalism in India demanded an unacceptable sacrifice of things uniquely Indian. Tagore felt that India was geographically too large and racially too diverse for a single Indian identity, and that to insist on national identity would be to create another monster like caste.[28] He recognized in the caste system an attempt to relationalize India's social diversity, but he argued that caste failed to realize "that in human beings differences are not like the physical barriers of mountains, fixed for ever—they are fluid with life's flow."[29] Caste give the benefit of peace and stability, but removed the opportunity for individual growth. For Tagore, political nationalism did much the same thing : it presumed on the individual by defining what he was and what he stood for, and allowed little room for dissent or individual opinion.

Pursuant to his concern for individual freedom, Tagore focused on the competition which he saw as the fundamental force behind political nationalism, and which has its genesis in "the greed of wealth and power" that "can never come to any other end but. . . violent death."[30] Such lust has no bounds, and saps the vital energy which should be channelled into the development of man's moral being, into man's "higher nature,"[31] where is achieved the "satisfaction of moral exaltation."[32] Therefore, Tagore called on men of "thought and power,"[33] not to imitate the "national carnivals of materialism."[34] but to stand as "the harmony of completeness in humanity,"[35] which is only realized if every person looks to individual moral development consistent with universal principles of love and justice.

This call for harmony was the essential foundation of Tagore's internationalism. "The idea of India," he said, "is against the intense consciousness of the separateness of one's own people from others. . .Thefore, my one prayer is, let India stand for co-operation of all peoples of the world."[36] Tagore's point is a typically Indian one : "Unity is Truth, and separateness is *Maya*."[37] And it is under this rubric that he looked for a unity of east and west, each drawing on the strengths of the other, while the west can take from

the east "the mystic consciousness of the Infinite."[38] the east "must find her own balance in Science—the magnificant gift that the West can bring to her."[39] Too much, in other words, has the west spurned the spirit and the east turned away from the world : only together can the ideal of creativity be realized.

In short, Tagore identified freedom with the destruction of the very thing for which Gandhi seemed to be working. As he said to C.F. Andrews, who was responsible for bringing Tagore and Gandhi together in the first place, India's true goal must be "to emancipate Man from the meshes that he himself has woven round him. . .these organizations of National Egoism."[40] This differs markedly from Gandhi's perception of a national unity consisting of "a common purpose, a common goal and common sorrows,"[41] and his belief that India must establish her own identity before she can participate as an equal partner in the international community.

It would be wrong, however, to say that Tagore's internationalism stood completely opposed to Gandhi's nationalism, for, as Gandhi himself indicated, *swaraj* "is not independence but healthy and dignified interdependence."[42] "I see nothing grand or impossible," he said, "about expressing our readiness for universal interdependence rather than independence,"[43] Gandhi believed this was the only way that India could make a contribution to the world. "I want the freedom of my country" he insisted, "so that other countries may learn something from my free country."[44] Gandhi might warn against aggression, insisting that freedom be "not at the expense or exploitation of others,"[45] but he also know that no one listens to a subjugated nation.

Despite Gandhi's position on "voluntary interdependence,"[46] however, Tagore and Gandhi were still at odds over the whole matter of political activity. It was not so much that Tagore rejected Indian independence, but that he possessed a deep-seated suspicion of political activity and feared the ramifications of aggressive nationalism. Tagore contended that independence would evolve as each individual develops as a moral being. The desire for freedom, moreover, would not stop with national boundaries, but would lead to the elimination of boundaries in the interest of free co-operation among all people. Although Gandhi admired Tagore's idealistic vision, he was more of a pragmatist, working towards what he felt were more realistic goals. It was this that

motivated his interest in politics. "If I seem to take part in politics," he once said to Tagore, it is "because politics encircle us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries."[47] Gandhi saw politics as a means to moral and social reform, even though, by his own admission, he would have preferred doing other things. He allowed, for example, that the "work of social reform. . . .is a hundred times dearer to me that what is called purely political work," yet he knew that "social work would be impossible without the help of political work."[48]

For Gandhi, political action took primary form in *satyagraha* or "truth force," which refers more specifically to Gandhi's conception of non-violent non-cooperation.[49] As such it was viewed by Gandhi as a means to "revolutionize social ideals and do away with despotisms."[50] The "non-cooperation" dimension of *satyagraha* entails "disobedience to the law of the State. . . .when it comes in conflict with the law of God."[51] This disobedience, however, must not be interpreted as disrespect for the idea of law. As Gandhi wrote, "A *satyagrahi*. . . .appears momentarily to disobey laws and the constituted authority only to prove in the end his regard for both."[52] "Non-violence," the other major dimension of *satyagraha*, stresses that *satyagraha* is a means of conversion rather than coercion. The *satyagrahi* aims through persuasion to establish the wrongness of one position and the correctness of another; his purpose, in Gandhi's words, is to achieve "agreement, never dictation, much less humiliation of the opponent."[53] To this end, love, which for Gandhi is the real meaning of *ahimsa*, is the primary motivation behind *satyagraha*, not only because one must love one's enemies, but also because one must see the benefit to one's opponent as more important than the benefit to oneself. Gandhi was careful, in his definition, to distinguish *satyagraha* from passive resistance. "Non-cooperation," Gandhi insisted, "is not a passive state, it is an intensely active state—more active than physical resistance or violence."[54] And it is active because it takes tremendous commitment from the participant. The *satyagrahi* must be scrupulously honest, be prepared to loss all he has, including life itself, follow non-violence, non only in deed, but also in thought and word, and have no mental reservations about commitment to non-violence.[55]

Given Tagore's insistence on the "co-operation of all peoples of the world," he was necessarily opposed to *satyagraha*, seeing it as something which set one person against another. He argued, in fact, that *satyagraha* worked against *ahimsa* :

> Love is the ultimate truth of soul. We should do all we can, not to outrage that truth, to carry its banner against all opposition. The idea of non-cooperation unnecessarily hurts that truth. It is not our heart fire, but the fire that burns out our hearth and home.[56]

But Tagore's concerns went beyond this, for he desparately feared that non-cooperation would lead to uncontrolled violence. He repeatedly warned that non-cooperation "has at its back a fierce joy of annihilation, which at its best is asceticism, and at its worst that orgy of frightfulness in which human nature, losing faith in the basic reality of normal life, finds a disinterested delight in an unmeaning devastation."[57]

Some of the most important criticism of Gandhi's non-cooperation movement is contained in a series of letters written by Tagore to C.F. Andrews in 1921, which were latter published in *The Modern Review*, Gandhi did not let these letters go unanswered, and, significantly, his responses pointed to Tagore's concern about the latent violence in *satyagraha*. Directly addressing the poet, Gandhi wrote in *Young India*, "I would like to assure him and India that Non-cooperation in conception is not any of the things he fears."[58] If non-cooperation "appears in the end to have failed," Gandhi said, "it will be no more the fault of the doctrine than it would of Truth."[59] Important here is how Gandhi recognized that non-cooperation is different in practice than in principle.[60] But this was exactly Tagore's point. Tagore never had any doubts about Gandhi's *ahimsa*, and saw the Mahatma's "emphasis on the truth and purity of the means, from which he. . . .[had] evolved his creed of non-violence as but another aspect of his deep and insistent humanity."[61] But Tagore still feared non-violent non-cooperation, because he felt there were few men who could do what Gandhi could. Thus Tagore wrote to Gandhi, "I know your teaching is to fight against evil by the help of good. But such a fight is for heroes and not for men led by the impulses of the moment."[62]

A further point of disagreement between the two men stemmed from Gandhi's apparent rejection of western thought, which Tagore saw as a further implication of non-cooperation. Gandhi expressed dismay at the "evil wrought by the English mediumi"[63] and was especially concerned with the way it had "emasculated the English-educated Indian,"[64] making him totally the product of a foreign culture. He deplored the process by which the English language had displaced India's indigenous languages, calling it "one of the saddest chapters in the British connection."[65] Gandhi's conclusion was clear : "No country can become a nation by producing a nation of imitators."[66] It is for these reasons that Gandhi called English education an "unmitigated evil."[67] English education was both destructive to the Indian imagination and disruptive to the social and cultural continuity of India. It goes without saying that there was some justification for Gandhi's condemnation of the English educational system in India; English education, he felt, had given to the Indian people a picture of their own civilization as "imbecile, barbarous, superstitious and useless for practical purposes."[68] Gandhi also understood, however, that there was a degree of truth in the English view of Indian culture, and it was for this reason that he saw education as a crucial component in the revitalization of a free India.

While Tagore supported the idea of a revitalized Indian culture, he had no sympathy for Gandhi's apparent rejection of western thought and education. Like Gandhi, Tagore felt education must be concerned with the whole man. But this did not mitigate a fundamental difference of emphasis between the two men. Gandhi stressed skill acquisition over intellectual and aesthetic pursuits, while Tagore placed intellectual and aesthetic activities over practical ones. Tagore's emphasis was on culture in the widest sense : dance, art, drama, music, as well as the practical skills of life. Instead of reducing the role of literary tradition, as Gandhi did. Tagore insisted that literature was the best transmitter of culture and, therefore, the only true vehicle of education. This emphasis on culture, moreover, meant the culture of both east and west, and affirmed Tagore's belief that education must enable the individual to relate to the world in the fullest possible way.[69]

It is not the case, however, that Gandhi advocated cultural isolationism. He admitted, for instance, that "I want the cultures

of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible,"[70] even while expressing a desire not to "live in other people's houses as an interloper."[71] But despite such statements Tagore worried about Gandhi's anti-intellectual, anti-western stance, which he felt was given too easily to a misleading dichotomy between east and west. He was appalled by Gandhi's claim that "the British Government in India constitutes a struggle between the modern civilization, which is the Kingdom of Satan, and the ancient civilization, which is the Kingdom of God."[72] Of the view that English education and western ideas had led to the impoverishment of Indian culture, Tagore said, "it would be wrong to blame the Western culture itself for such futility."[73]

Tagore saw the problem in India's uncritical acceptance of western ideas and values, which were never adequately seen in relation to those of the east. As he observed, "the blame lies in not using our own receptacle for this culture."[74] The answer to India's problem was not in rejection, but in developing the critical ability to distinguish good from bad in the widest possible context. Only then, Tagore argued, can India truly gain from the west and be able to give something in return. "The cry which has been raised. . . of rejecting Western culture," he said, "only means the paralyzing of our own power to give anything to the West."[75] The people of India will only realize their potential if they open themselves up to a world which includes the west. "If we come into real touch with the West through the disinterested medium of intellectual co-operation." Tagore maintained, "we shall gain a true perspective of the human world; realize our position in it, and have faith in the possibility of widening and deepening our connection with it."[76]

Gandhi answer to much of this criticism was to claim that Tagore had misunderstood him. "I am extremely sorry," Gandhi wrote, "for the Poet's misreading of this great movement of reformation, purification, and patriotism. . . I respectfully warn him against mistaking its excrescences for the movement itself."[77] This, however, was one of Tagore's major concerns. He felt that these "excrescences" could become the permanent reality of India. Gandhi saw his India-first position as a necessary preliminary step to India's full participation in the world, but Tagore feared it would produce an insular culture permanently handicapped by narrowness of vision.

It was this concern about limited vision that also underpinned Tagore's objections to Gandhi's *charkha* or spinning. Gandhi's reasons for *charkha* and the wearing of *khadi* were immediate ones. Hunger and idleness were chronic problems afflictine millions. While Gandhi admitted that better farming methods would produce more food, he also felt that any significant results from improved agriculture were years in the future. With spinning, something could be done immediately to lessen both idleness and hunger. By refusing to wear imported cloth and by wearing homespun. Indians could provide work for many hands. Beyond this, spinning would serve as a foundation for the village life on which Indian social structure was built. The most important reason for *charkha*, however, was the one Gandhi did not mention in his letters to Tagore : the desire to embarrass the British both politically and economically, and thereby to lesson their hold on India. This kind of coercion Tagore found unacceptable.

Tagore argued that *charkha* perpetuated the worst feature of caste, the "ominous process of being levelled down into sameness,"[78] the perpetuation of "petty routine duties."[79] This perpetuation of drudgery. Tagore argued, had produced India's distaste for existence. Liberation from *samsara,* from "the terribleness of this everlasting recapitulation,"[80] had led the individual to cut himself off from life. Such a view Tagore categorically rejected. "Whatever our Shastras may or may have said, this popular conception of the Creator's doing is the very opposite to what He really did."[81] While for a time man may be coerced into behaving like a machine, his mind will eventually demand to rise above the drudgery of routine. If man is to find fulfilment, he must not turn away from the world, but participate fully in it.

Such observations conclude in Tagore's statement, "I am not ashamed—though there is every reason to be afraid—to admit that the depths of my mind have not been moved by the Charkha agitation."[82] Although Tagore recognized how *charkha* could go a long way in alleviating India's poverty, he also felt it would never lead to true freedom because freedom was a thing of the mind which it ignored. *Charkha* was also another activitity that failed to recognize the uniqueness of each person. As Tagore

pointedly asked to *charkha*, "Has it really the divinity which may enable it to appropriate the single-minded devotion of all the millions of India, despite their diversity of temperament and talent ?"[83]

It was in reply to this criticism that Gandhi articulated, better than anywhere else the difference between himself and Tagore : "The Poet lives in a magnificent world of his own creation—his world of ideas. I am a slave of somebody else's creation—the spinning wheel."[84] Gandhi saw Tagore as the poet who brought freshness of vision, while he saw himself as the pragmatist who worked with what was available. It was because Tagore was a visionary, Gandhi claimed, that the poet often misunderstood his intentions and actions. Particularly, Gandhi accused Tagore of misleading exaggeration. *Charkha* Gandhi insisted, is not the all-consuming thing Tagore claimed. It is not a matter of sacrificing creativity and freedom : rather it is a means of filling up idle time and drawing the Indian people together. Instead of producing a "deathlike sameness," it is intended to realize the essential and living oneness of interest among India's myriads."[85]

To see one as a pragmatist and the other as a poet, as did Gandhi in defending *charkha*, goes a long way in explaining the conflict between the two men. But it is not the only explanation, for to stress this difference exclusively is to overlook their very significant religious differences. Gandhi's views on God and religion are those of a man caught up in the arena of public life. Tagore's ideas come from a man who sits back to observe the world—an outcome from the introspection possible only in a sanctuary such as Santiniketan.

There is some substance to the assessment that Gandhi's view of the Divine was inconsistent. Yet it is with his understanding of the Divine that Gandhi's religion begins, and to which all his social and political teachings eventually return. Sometimes Gandhi was the product of the Vaisnavite heritage, perceiving the Divine in theistic terms, extolling grace as the sole means to liberation, and recognizing the independent reality of the world as defined by *Dvaita*. On other occasions, there was much of the *Advaitist* in Gandhi, echoing as he did the Sankarite view that the Divine is an indeterminate, attributeless, impersonal absolute. And yet at still other times, Gandhi espoused both, claiming, "I am an *Advaitist* and yet I can support *Dvaitism*. The world is changing

every moment and is, therefore, unreal; it has no permanent existence. But though it is constantly changing, it has something about it which persists and it is, therefore, to that extent real."[86] It has been pointed out that Gandhi, in not possessing a trained philosophical mind, tended to misuse philosophical terms. Although there is justification for this view,[87] Gandhi's sometimes questionable interpretations of Indian philosophy also point to the essentially Vedic position concerning the one and the many, which he used to argue for religious pluralism and especially for Indian unity.

For Gandhi, God was neither a person nor a "thing", but was the "Essence of Life"[88] that is within us. Man's ultimate aim, which is the realization of God in all that he does, is not seeing something or "witnessing a miracle."[89] Rather it is the realization that God abides in one's heart. This is only attainable if we apprehend "our oneness with all creation."[90] which is the way of *ahimsa*—of selfless love in which we must "identify ourselves with every human being without exception."[91]

That God is the all-comprehensive reality leads to Gandhi's well-known belief that Truth is God; as Gandhi wrote, "Truth is the only comprehensive attribute of God."[92] Truth is *satya*, or "being," referring to the fullness of what is, Thus, Truth is *ahimsa* for it is through love that one realizes the pervasive unity that ties all people and all things together. "Cling to it," Gandhi implored, "it enables one to reach pure Truth,"[93] for "*Ahimsa* and Truth are the obverse of the same coin."[94]

It was this understanding of the Divine that allowed Gandhi to stand up as a spokesman for freedom. No man, he argued, knows the whole truth, for no man possesses a full transcendent awareness of absolute reality. At best "relative truth is all we know,"[95] and, therefore, no one person has a monopoly on truth. This is not to say, however, that there is anything wrong with relative truth, for it is relative truth that leads man to Absolute Truth. It is simply to indicate that for each man this relative truth is different, or, as Gandhi said, truth is "that which you believe to be true at this moment."[96] The only common denominator in all relative truth is that as a reflection of Absolute Truth it is an embodiment of *ahimsa*. The conclusion of such an argument is obvious no individual has the right to tell another what is true. This is especially so when one considers, as Gandhi did, that while

all faiths constitute a revelation of Absolute Truth, they are still imperfect. Therefore, no person can claim the superiority of his religion over another, and should instead be alive to the defects in his own.

In arguing for this relationship between Absolute Truth and relative truth, it is hardly surprising that Gandhi did not advocate a universal religion, some kind of synthesis of world religions. "What does it matter," he asked, "that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal" ?[97] For Gandhi, it was not right to make one thing into another, and in this regard he was adamantly opposed to prosyletism and conversion. What was important is that one follow one's own road to its conclusion.[98] In suggesting that religious growth is a thing of the heart, Gandhi clearly saw religion as existential. And as a purely existential experience, it was necessarily a relative truth, which no one could determine for the individual except himself.

Tagore equally appreciated the Divine unity that pervades all things and abhorred the idea of one religion being seen as superior to another. Like Gandhi moreover, his religious perspective was the product of many influences, evident in his writings are the beliefs and ideas of the Baul sect of Bengal, the Upanisads, Taoism. Buddhism, Vaisnavism, and the Brahmo Samaj. Important among these is the Vaisnavite tradition following from Chaitanya, revealed in Tagore's verse by an intense longing for the Divine. God, for Tagore, was a finite form of the infinite, the "Wisdom and spirit of the universe" who "give'st to forms and images a breath and everlasting motion."[99] God is one to whom man surrenders in the hope of salvation, accepting that he is nothing separate from God and achives worth only insofar as God extends it to him.

This, however, is only one part of Tagore's view of the Absolute. Rather than seeing the Divine only as an objective reality, Tagore also talked of the Infinite as the "creative principle of unity,"[100] in which "comprehension of the multitude is not as an outward receptacle but as an inner perfection that permeates and exceeds its contents."[101] Influenced by Ramanuja. Tagore saw the full apprehension of this harmony in diversity as the ultimate spiritual goal. To this end, man must not turn his back on the world but must participate fully in it. Tagore's way was not that of the ascetic, as he eloquently indicates in the remark that "only

by living life fully can you outgrow it. When the fruit has served its full term, drawing its juice from the branch as it dances with the wind and matures in the sun, then it feels in its core the call of the beyond and comes ready for its career of a wider life."[102]

While Tagore sometimes referred to spiritual deliverance as a final state in which one comes into the presence of God, he also saw man's quest for deliverance in different terms. In the context of an evolving creation, he saw spiritual life as the pursuit of a goal forever beyond man's grasp. Man's apprehension of the Divine is not a stepping outside of time to an eternal state of bliss. Rather, man participates in a never-ending process of spiritual growth, which Tagore described as a "continuous survival, perpetual overflow. . . beyond all boundaries of death."[103] There is no such thing as absolute release, for such an achievement would result in stagnation : "To come to an absolutely satisfactory conclusion is to come to the end of all things, and in that case the great child would have nothing else to do but to shut her curtain and go to sleep."[104] Continuous evolution is necessary if the universe is to have purpose. History, Tagore suggested, is "constant regeneration, a series of fresh beginnings and continual challenges to the old in order to reach a more and more perfect harmony with some fundamental of truth."[105] Thus, man lives an infinite number of lifetimes, yet never achieves absolute unity with the ideal of truth; as Tagore said, "this birth is strung together with ever new births—like the seven-coloured rays of the sun."[106] This must not be seen, however, as eternal failure. Rather man lives in a "world of eternal childhood"[107] where there is always something new to be discovered in what Tagore called the "eternal sea of Uunfolding."[108] To die, then, is not to leave the world, but to return to it, as suggested in his simple request of God, "let all my senses spread out and touch this world at thy feet."[109]

Reconciliation of Tagore's two perceptions of the Divine occurs in the role of imagination in spiritual life. Through the imagination one moves beyond theistic thinking in which the Divine stands over against the individual to an apprehension of the harmonious unity of all things. Imagination "is there," Tagore claimed, "to help a creature who has been left unfinished by his designer, undraped, undecorated, unarmoured, and without weapons."[110] It "makes us intensely conscious of a life we must

live which transcends the individual life and contradicts the biological meaning of the instinct of self-preservation."[111] Imagination leads to that "point where in the mystery of existence contradictions meet."[112] But imagination does not work alone, for Tagore, like Gandhi, pointed to love as necessary to spiritual growth. Through love man subsumes his individuality to another; here too he transcends his limitations in achieving a higher reality. To love God and his creation is to participate in this process of spiritual evolution, for "in love all the contradictions of existence merge themselves and are lost."[113]

The crucial distinction between Gandhi and Tagore, then, is that while Gandhi perceived the limited truths of this world to lead eventually to ultimate Truth, Tagore saw man's spiritual life to be an infinite series of experiences which only ever partially reveal the Divine. Gandhi placed great emphasis on relative truth, while Tagore was ever anticipating the next step in a spiritual journey celebrating life itself. Gandhi took one step at a time; Tagore was impatient, feeling that there was no single step, that the Divine was largely the process itself.

Important here for Gandhi were the traditional Hindu concepts of *dharma* and *karma* by which the individual is limited in what he can accomplish Gandhi saw each person committing himself to goals determined by inherent capabilities. He further believed that such limited fulfilment was all that could be asked, even though it falls far short of the ultimate value which is the Divine. For Gandhi, his patriotism, his concepts of *satyagraha* and *ahimsa*, and even such things as *charkha* are limited goals or relative truths by which society is gradually transformed, and moves progressively towards the realization of the ultimate values of non-violence, freedom, and love, which Gandhi saw as co-existent with the Divine. As Gandhi himself wrote. "For me the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country and therefore, of humanity . . . my patriatism is for me a stage in my journey to the life of eternal freedom and peace."[114] The important implication here is that the success of each individual in both perceiving and pursuing these truths will vary, dependent on who and what he is.

Gandhi's emphasis on the pursuit of limited goals differs radically from Tagore's flights of imagination where matters of everyday life seem of little consequence. The mundane is far from

Tagore's perception of beauty as the pervasive harmony of the universe. Echoing Keats' famous line, "we must ever know that 'beauty is truth, truth beauty;"[115] Tagore celebrated again and again how "through our sense of beauty we realize harmony in the universe."[116] The more we look the universe, the more "we realize that good and evil, pleasure and pain, life and death, in their ceaseless ebb and flow, constitute the symphony of the universe."[117] Beauty is "a subtle harmony between prologue and epilogue, the primary and the secondary, the part and the whole."[118]

As the artist searching for the balance and harmony of the Divine. Tagore found unacceptable Gandhi's concern with the parts. For Tagore, excess and contradiction came from man's limited vision in which the particulars get in the way of the whole. Thus, Tagore, despite his praise for Gandhi, had a deep concern that Gandhi's emphasis on relative truth might blind him to the full implications of his actions. Tagore recognized no first steps, no limited goals. Not only did they run counter to his idea of the "organic wholeness of the individual,"[119] but they always stood in danger of being transformed by ordinary minds into ultimate values. As Tagore himself said, they could become the "timid orthodoxy [that] dwarfs man through its idolatry of the past."[120] And indeed this is exactly how Tagore saw the whole business of nationalism, as he wished the individual to be open to all that is.

Gandhi and Tagore stood apart at the must fundamental level, not only concerning India's future, but also in their perceptions of the world and the Divine. One was a pragmatist who responded to immediate political and social circumstances, the other a poet removed from the political arena who drew from the romantic traditions of both east and west. Gandhi described his religion as one of "Truth." writing that "We are all sparks of Truth. The sum total of these sparks is indescribable, as yet-Unknown-Truth, which is God."[121] He accepted that one gets only glimpses of this Truth and that in practice one aims at achieving relative truths. In this context, political activity is a moral effort to develop social relations in such a way that they move closer to the ideal. But there are limitations in what Gandhi believed, and he accepted that one's ambitions must not exceed practical realities. Tagore, however, refused to accept barriers.

Freedom, he said, is awakening to the Divine unity that "shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of Grass."[122] The imagination allows one to look into the world to experience the never-ending joy of seeing more and more the divinity behind it. And through love, one can realize the brotherhood of the spirit that, transcends nation and race, and that allows one to "attain communion with . . . infinite joy."[123]

Despite these differences, however, neither man seemed to lose faith in the other Gandhi wrote towards the end of his life. "I started with a disposition to detect a conflict between Gurudev and myself but ended with the glorious discovery that there was none."[124] Similarly, Tagore indicated a common understanding in saying of Gandhi, "Perhaps he will fail as the Buddha failed and as Christ failed to wean men from their iniquities, but he will always be remembered as one who made his life a lesson for all ages to come."[125] It is true that Gandhi and Tagore might have simply glossed over their differences, recognizing that any final resolution was impossible. It is more likely, however, that their tolerance and deep concern for humanity allowed them to see the greatness of the other, and led to Nehru's later claim that these two men "seemed to represent different but harmonious aspects of India."[126]

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3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. By far the best account of the details of the Tagore-Gandhi controversy are found in Sibnarayan Ray. "Tagore-Gandhi Controversy," *Gandhi, India and the World : An International Symposium*, ed. Sibnarayan Ray (Philadelphia Temple University Press, 1970). pp. 119-41.
6. Ray, pp. 119-20.
7. R.K. Prabhu and Ravindra Kelekar, eds., *Truth Called Them Differently*; *Tagore-Gandhi Controversy* (Ahmedabad Navajivan Publishing House, 1961), p. 121 Hereafter referred to as *Truth.*
8. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
9. M.K. Gandhi, *Mv Religion*, ed , Bharatan Kumarappa (1955; rpt. Ahmedabad; Navajivan Publishing House, 1958), p. 117.

46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
48. *Ibid.*
49. Significantly, Gandhi never finished formulating his concept of *satyagraha*; it was something; he was ever "groping" after (*Selections*. p. 218).
50. *Sections*, p. 219.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
56. *Trurh*, p. 21.
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58. *Truth*, p. 37.
59. *Ibid.*
60. In this regard, Tagore wrote a year before his death, " 'Hope for the future' I have never lost and never will, because it is embedded in my undying faith in non-violence. What has, however, clearly happened in my case is the discovery that in all probability there is a vital defect in my technique of the working of non-violence. . . . Failure of my technique of non-violence causes no loss of faith in non-violence itself. On the contrary, that faith is, if possible, strengthened by the discovery of a possible flaw in the technique (Quoted in Karl H. Potter. "Explorations in Gandhi's Theory of Non-violence," in Power, p. 91).
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62. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
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69. See Cenkner, pp. 43-59, 99-115.
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89. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
92. *Ibid..* p. 62.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
96. *Ibid.*
97. *Selections*, p. 256.
98. As Gandhi wrote. "After long study and experience, I have come to the conclusion that (1) all religions are true; (2) all religions have some error in them; (3) all religions are almost as dear to me as my own Hinduism, in as much as all human beings should be as dear to one as one's own relatives. My own veneration for other faiths is the same as that for my own faith; therefore, no thought of conversion is possible. The aim of the Fellowship should be to help a Hindu to become a better Hindu, a Mussalman to become a better Mussalman, and a Christian a better Christian . . . . Our prayer for others must be NOT 'God, give him the light thou hast given me." BUT "Give him all the light and truth he needs for his development.' Pray merely that your friends may become better men, whatever their form of religion" (Quoted' in Dutta, p. 45)
99. *The Religion of Man*, p. 64.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
101. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
102. Rabindranath Tagore, "The World of Personality," in *Personality: Lectures Delivered in America* (London; Macmillan and Co., 1917), p. 64.
103. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
104. *The Religion of Man*, p. 16.
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106. Rabindranath Tagore, "On the Sick Bed," in *Wings of Death*, trans. Aurobindo Bose (London; John Murray, 1960), p. 23.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
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111. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
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113. Rabindranath Tagore, *Sadhana : The Realization of Life* (London; Macmillan and Co., 1913), p. 114.
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126. Nehru, p. 258.

42

A PROLOGUE TO GANDHI-TAGORE DRAMA

KSHITIS ROY

The first recorded meeting between Gandhi and Tagore took place at Santiniketan in 1915. They should have met the first time 25 years earlier. In September 1890, the two must have visited Paris about the same time an ascended the Eiffel Tower. They might have sat at two different tables of the Tower Restaurant, having their lunch *a la carte* just for the satisfaction of being able to say they had it at such great hight. They might well have come across each other without the benefit of an introduction. That mine is not an idle guess is borne out by what Gandhi writes on the Great Exhibition in his autobiography and Tagore in his 'Diary of a Sojourn in Europe'.

Arrived in London, Tagore's 'Diary' records a meeting on October 2 with Narayan Hemchandra, to whom Gandhi devotes a whole chapter of his autobiography. Translation was a passion with Hemchandra; he had made it his life's mission to present the best of world literature in Gujarati. On coming to England he promptly appointed young Gandhi his tutor for English. When the teacher despaired of his pupil's innocence of grammar ('horse' was a verb with him and 'run' a noun), Hemchandra twitted him, "Well, do you know Bengali ? I know it, I have travelled in Bengal. It is I who have given Maharshi Devendranath Tagore's works to the Gujarati-speaking world."

Both Tagore and Gandhi refer to him as "a queer-looking and queerly dressed person." Tagore used to know him from his visits to the Jorasanko house. Meeting Hemchandra in London,

and moved to pity at the poverty of his wardrobe, Tagore presented Hemchandra with one of his warm suits. Being lightly built and short of stature Hemchandra must have made necessary alterations to that suit made to the measure of the six-footer poet. When he presented himself next before his young tutor (immaculate in his Bond Street-wear), small wonder if Gandhi considered Hemchandra's dress queer—"a clumsy pair of trousers, a wrinkled, dirty brown cost after the Parsi fashion, no necktie or collar. . ."

The chances were strong in favour of Hemchandra doing the introduction between Tagore and Gandhi. But that was not to be.

Another fine chance, regrettably lost, was in 1901. In January that year, for the first time in his life, Tagore conducted the Eleventh Magh service at the Jorasanko house. Gandhi, who had extended his stay in Calcutta after attending the Congress Session, "went to see Maharshi Devendranath Tagore. But as no interviews with him were allowed them, we could not see him. We were, however, invited to a celebration of the Brahmo Samaj held at his place, and there we had the privilege of listening to fine Bengali music. Ever since I have been a lover of Bengali music." Gandhi could not register that the songs were the composition of the same man who gave the sermon, and that he was the youngest son of the Maharshi and bore the name of Rabindranath.

MEETING THROUGH MODERN REVIEW

Gandhi's first propaganda-tour of India on behalf of Indian settlers in South Africa was in 1896. The Bengali press cold-shouldered him then. But the Anglo-Indian press—notably Saunders of "The Englishman"—warmly espoused his cause. It was left to Ramananda Chatterji to repair the default of his compatriots. Since its very inception "*The Modern Review*" gave liberal coverage to Gandhi's Passive. Resistance movement in Transvaal. These could hardly have escaped the notice of Tagore, a close friend of the periodical and its editor, and one of its regular contributors. Many Tagore scholars conjecture that one of Tagor's powerful political plays, *Prayaschitta* which he wrote in 1908 and which sets off a rebel, a people's leader in the person of a mandicant minstrel, Dhananjoy against a petudant power-loving

autocrat is modelled after the no-tax campaigner of Transvaal.

MISSION TO SOUTH AFRICA

In any case, by the end of 1913, Tagore was sufficiently familiar with Gandhi's name and his movement to give his blessings to the departure of a two-man mission from Santiniketan to South Africa. These two were Tagore's English friends, Andrews and Pearson. A special service was held the evening before they started on their journey, and in his discourse to the congragation Tagore explained the mission that they had before them. "They are taking with them the massage of Santi which dwells in the heart of Santiniketan," he said. Pearson was given a small purse to carry the subscription collected by the schoolboys as also their own earnings from voluntary labour and the cost of sugar they had cut out of their menu in the refectory, over a period. This was to be the gift from the boys of Santiniketan to the boys of the Phoenix Asram. In addition. Andrews must have carried with him a letter from Tagore to Gandhi, which was later published in the Golden Number of "Indian Opinion" shortly before Gandhi left South Africa for good. The letter refers to the strugle in South Africa as the 'steep ascent of manhood not through the bloody path of violence but that of dignified patience and heroic self-renunciation. The power our fellow countrymen have shown in standing firm for their cause under the severest trials has given us a firmer faith in the strength of the God that can defy sufferings and defeats at the hands of physical supremacy, that can make gains of its losses.'

In February 1914 Andrews had to leave South Africa for England on receipt of the news of his mother's death. In the course of a letter condoling him. Tagore wrote to Andrews: "You know our best love was with you while you were fighting our cause in Africa along with Mr. Gandhi."

Pearson stayed on, and sent regular despatches to Tagore on the South African situation. He also helped the Phoenix boys to acquire pen-friends from amost their opposite numbers at Santiniketan.

THE MISSION RETURNS

Pearson returned to Santiniketan on March 31 and Andrews

on April 17. Both were given a hero's welcome—Tagore himself leading the schoolboys right upto the railway station two miles away to receive them. Andrews was led in a procession to a reception where after garlanding him Tagore read a poem witten in his honour :

From the shrine of the West
You have brought us living water.
We welcome you, friend.
The East has offered you
her garland of love.
Accept it and welcome, friend.
Your love has opened
The door of our heart.
Enter and welcome, friend.
You have come to us
as a gift of the Lord
We bow to him, Friend.

THE PHOENIX PARTY

Soon after, the Phoenix Party sailed for India as planned. Gandhi was in London at the time, down with an attack of pleurisy. The original plan was for Gandhi to precede the party. But the war and his ailment upset the calculations. He sent a hurried cable to Andrews to arrange some accommodation "where the Phoenix Party might stay together and live the life they had led at Phoenix." After a brief stay at Gurukul followed by a few days at Susil Rudra's home in Delhi, the Phoenix Party moved finally on to Santiniketan. At Andrews's instance, Tagore made a cottage next door to his own, ready to receive the guests. By the end of October, twenty boys led by Maganlal Gandhi took up residence in this cottage—with Tagore himself looking after them. "The Asram" for October 1914 carried an article by Ramdas Gandhi entitled "My Gaol Experience in South Africa."

Maganlal was a strict disciplinarian and carried out Gandhi's instruction about the Phoenix Party leading the life they had at Phoenix, to the letter. The boys were averse to games but were ever ready for any drudgery—including scavenging. "Their kitchen was self-conducted. The food was of the simplest. Condiments

were eschewed. Rice, dal, vegetables and even wheat flour were all cooked at one and the same time in a steam cooker."

After helping the party settle down, Tagore had to proceed to Allahabad *via* Calcutta on an urgent errand. In a letter to Andrews dated November 15, Tagore gave his impression of the Phoenix boys : "What little I have seen of the Phoenix boys, they are very nice. But it is a pity to be so completely nice. They have discipline where they should have ideals. They are trained to obey which is bad for a human being. Obedience is good not because it is good in itself, but because it is a sacrifice. These boys are in danger of forgetting to wish for anything, and wishing is the best part of attainment." Realising that his first reaction might sound somewhat harsh and unfair, and keen not to hurt Andrews' feelings, Tagore followed up his first letter with another written three days after : "I had been somewhat unfair to the Phoenix boys in my last letter to you. . . I think they are very lovable though. I get rid of my misgivings about their system of training."

It was only on landing in Bombay early in 1915 that Gandhi came to learn that the Phoenix Party was at Santiniketan. Within days of his arrival he received Tagore's letter : "That you could think of my school as the right and likely place where your Phoenix boys could take shelter when they were in India, has given me real pleasure and that pleasure has been greatly enhanced when I saw those dear boys in that place. We all feel that their influence will be of great value to our boys and I hope that they in their turn will gain something which will make their stay at Santiniketan fruitful. I write this letter to thank you for allowing *your* boys to become *our* boys as well and thus form a living link in the *sadhana* of both our lives."

THREE-ARCHED WELCOME

Mid-January 1915 saw Tagore in Calcutta *en route* to the Tagore estates at Shelidah. On February 15, Andrews received Gandhi's telegram to the effect that he and his wife would reach Santiniketan on 17th. Detained in Calcutta, by certain future engagements, Tagore made anxious enquiries to ensure that the honoured guests were well-received and make at home. Preparations were well-laid to accord them a suitable welcome,

Meanwhile, the person whom the welcome awaited, was in train, As was his wont, he made his daily entries in his diary, even in train :

Monday Feb 15, 1915—Accompanied by Nagindas start for Bolpur.

Feb 16, 1915—On the way.

Feb 17, 1915—Andrews and Santoshbabu attend train at Burdwan station. Arrived Bolpur in the evening. Received genuine welcome and hospitality.

The brief reference to the reception which is in line with the Gandhian economy in verbal use, is described in his Autobiography as 'a beautiful combination of simplicity, art and love.'

In June-July issue of "The Asram", Prafulla Chaudhuri, a student of the Ninth group gives a more vivid account : "Then all the boys were engaged in cleaning the Asram. . . . Some of us began to repair the main road and they did the word of about five days in a school day. . . . During 15th, 16th and 17th we did nothing but cleaning the Asram, and making arches and dais to welcome Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi. . . . On 17th when the time for going to the station came the bell was rung. . . . We and the train reached at the same time. . . .They had come outside the station by another path. They had put on very simple dress and there were no shoes on Mr. Gandhi's feet. They refused to come to our asram in the carriage sent by our Dwijendranath Tagore. So they began to walk with us. . . . At first they went to see Mr. Dwijendranath Tagore, and after meeting him they came to the first gate. . . . Then they came to the second arch. . . . Then they came to the third gate and that was the finest and largest of the three. . . . When they had taken their seats Kshitimohan Babu Mr. Rajangam and Mr. Dattatreya. . . . read some hymns at this gate. After the hymns were read, Mr. Dwijendranath Tagore sang a song with a music party. Then Mr. Asit Haldar presented a very fine picture. . . . After the welcome there was a feast that day. . . . Mr. Gandhi requested the teachers to give us a holiday and we got a holiday next day."

The following day Andrews received Tagore's letter : "I hope Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi have arrived. . . . and Santineketan has accorded them welcome as befits her and them. I shall convey my love to them personally when we meet. . . Monday will see me at Bolpur. . . ."

DEATH OF GOKHALE

But, Gandhi's entry in the Diary for February 20 reads: "Receive wire about the passing of Rajyaguru (Gokhale). Depart from Bolpure. . . . J.B. (Kripalani ?) sends telegram. Andrews accompanies upto Burdwan. Had long talk with him regarding educational reforms. Crisis in boarding train. Maganlal, Nagindas and Ba accompany." The relevant portion in the autobiography reads : "I had intended to stay at Santiniketan for some time. But fate willed otherwise. I had hardly been there a week when I received from Poona a telegram announcing Gokhale's death. Santiniketan was immersed in grief. All the members came over to me to express their condolences. A special meeting was called in the Asram temple to mourn the national loss. It was a solemn function."

Tagore returned to Santiniketan on Monday, February 22 as planned. Gandhi was already in Poona then.

THEIR FRIST MEETING

The entry in the Gandhi Dairy under March 6 reads : "Reach Santiniketan. Meet Gurudeva." These cryptic words raise the curtain on a historic friendship between two of India's most towering personalities extending over a period of twenty-five years. Their contrasts and what they had in common proved so fascinating a subject that it invited study by such well-known names as Andrews, Rolland. Nehru and a host of others who knew and admired them both. But that part of the story, or rather the play proper, does not concern us here. Let us remain satisfied for the present with the prologue only.

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TAGORE AND COOMARASWAMY

K. CHANDRASEKHARAN

In the annals of India, significance of a unique kind will attach to the month of August. Not only because it saw the birth of Independence for this vast Sub-Continent on August 15, 1947, . . . but also for the memories of two world's choicest master-spirits associated with it.

August 7, 1941, witnessed the passing aways of the Nobel Laureate, poet Rabindranath Tagore and the August 22, 1877, gave birth to Ananda Coomaraswamy. Both have stamped by their extraordinary powers of spiritual understanding, an unforgettable impression of eternal values on the minds of even a rapidly changing world.

Tagore was a poet pouring out his heart ia singing with unusual vitality and freshness imagery of all life around. His experience of a unity spirit in all existing things, whether human or otherwise and his unmatched penetration into Truth clothed in beauty, steeped him in the joy of unravelling of the mystery of the eternal Lila (play of God). Everytime that be emerged from his deep meditation, a flower of pervading perfume came out of his imagination.

SHAPING HIS IDEAS

India loved the poet not merely for his songs but for his ventures of a constructive nature to revitalise the nation along the paths of undying creativity and cultural re-orientation. His "*constant striving*" for awakening of the human spirit drove him to

gather in his inexhaustible storehouse of ideas, many a stimulus for the shaping of the worlds towards Sivam Sundaram and Santam.

He sent high his prayers :

> "This is my prayer that I may know before I leave why. The earth called me to her arms.
>
> Why her night's silences spoke to me of stars, and her daylight kissed my thoughts into flowers.
>
> Before I go, may I linger over my last refrain, completing its music. May the lamp be it to see your face and the wreath woven to crown you."
>
> (Fruit Gathering)

If Tagore saw in India sprouts of hope for its re-emergence in lasting revival of her mission of spreading peace and harmony in a world of violence and suffering Ananda Coomaraswamy all his life emphasised only the need for India's living in her own Indianness, particularly her arts and cultural attainments. His encyclopaedic knowledge of the Western and Eastern traditions and heritages from the past, confirmed him solely to more and more of traditionalist revival, not in the narrow sense, but in the spirit of remodelling of most of our artistic creativity with an inward eye to a vision of the growth of values which will last for ever.

His explanation to the primitive mentality is atonce convincing and invigorating :

It is very far from truth that in a traditional society, the individual is regimented. It is only in democracies, Soviets and dictatorships that a way of life is imposed upon the individual man from without. In the unanimous societies the way of life is self-imposed in the sense that 'fate lies in the created cause themselves' and this is one of the many ways in which the order of the traditinonal society conforms to the order of nature; it is in the unanimous societies that the possibility of self-realisation, that is the possibility of transcending the limitations of individuality—is best provided. In fact, it is for the sake of such a self-realisation that the tradition itself is perpetuated' (*Lipsey Roger's Ananda Coomaraswamy in three volumes, in Vol. 3, P. 290*).

WHERE HE MADE ENEMIES

His insistence upon the true pivots of traditional art and culture evoked sometime both appreciation and criticism. In his preface to Vol. I Roger makes no secret of how Ananda Coomaraswamy won his international reputation, despite disapproval in certain quarters. He writes :

"He conquered by scholarship, eloquence, and a completely uncompromising set of values, but where he failed to conquer he made enemies. For him the study of ancient cultures went hand in hand with severe criticism of modern culture. He was partly a prophet, and at worst a preacher, but at best a seer—an unexcited unecstatic one, a clear and cultured intelligence, that thought it dishonest to comment enthusiastically on works of art that can only be understood slowly."

ART FOR RASIKAS

In short, it was his view that India's culture and her art as evidenced in her music, sculpture, architecture, painting and handicrafts are the results of not one century or two, but of ages of slow experiment and correction with a constant application of wisdom in all the remifications of her thought and action. Art for him was not for the artist alone but equally for the Rasika. He argued, "Oriental art is not a labour-saving device, where nothing can be left out, lest the spectator should exert himself ; on the country, it is the spectator's own energy (Utshaha) that is the cause of aesthetic experience (asvadana), just as in the case of children playing with clay elephants or the like (*Dasarupa*).

Tagore and Coomaraswamy were kindred spirits whose insight and farsight coalesced to re-affirm the great efficacy of poetry and philosophy through everything performed with imagination and concentration of skill.

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THE RABINDRANATH THAT BENGALIS HATE

Maitreyi Chatterjee*

When did real tragedy strike a great man like Rabindranath Tagore ? If we study the various episodes in his life, we find that, contrary to the belief circulated by a few so-called radical intellectuals, his life was not a bed of roses. True, he had all the trappings of one born with a silver spoon, studded with gems, in his month. But to say that he lived an ivory-towered existence, out of touch with the common milieu of Bengalis, is to falsely categorise him. His emergence as a writer was not easily accepted by the existing establishment. He had to face his share of taunts, abuse and character assassination. But being grossly misunderstood was a fact Tagore had taught himself to accept. The personal losses that he suffered (the untimely death of children, and of his favourite grandson) he bore with remarkable fortitude. For him all these were not tragedies but an enrichment of life through experience.

The real tragedy in his life lay elsewhere. When universal recognition came to him *via* the west, it was unfortunate but not unexpected for when was the prophet ever honoured in his own land ? In their new enthusiasm (arising perhaps out of a sense of guilt) the Bengali population suddenly elevated him to the position of 'Gurudev'. For Tagore there was now no going back. He was firmly put on a pedestal and was expected to

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stay there. The moment of real tragedy had inexorably started blocking all escape routes for the person who again and again, in all his writings, had pleaded the virtue of solitude and quiet withdrawal of the soul for self-searching.

The Bengali finds it convenient to worship an idol rather than cherish ideals. This trait is transparent in the attempt to deify Tagore without caring very deeply for the ideals that he believed in and stood up for. Today, forty years after his death. Tagore's comment on the Bengalis is still cent per cent valid. Tagore's introspection and self-criticism has not prodded the Bengali to examine himself, acknowledge one admit his faults and make attempts to get over the drawbacks mentioned by the thinker-poet.

Being "educated" in the truest sense of the word, Rabindranath achieved an objective quality of vision that made him see the faults of his fellowmen clearly, without malice and prejudice. His anguished cry that Mother Bengal, had created seven crores of Bengalis but not human beings (*Bangamata*) was not said out of sarcasm or a sanctimonious holierthan-than feeling. It was uttered in pain at the colossal human waste that the Bengali was (and still is).

Tagore's dream of a real human being was not an impossible one. He did not visualise the ideal Bengali as perfect. He was only averse to a race that was weak, mean, heartless, lethargic, vain and argumentative (*Chaaritrapuja*). Was it too much to expect that his Bengali contemporaries would be divested of, if not all, at least some of the above-mentioned human imperfections ? His clarity made him point out that we (Bengalis) start something, but do not care to complete it. We make a show of work without putting in real work. What we practise we do not believe in; on the contrary, we lack the courage of conviction to act on our beliefs. We impress with words, words and more words, but balk at the thought of the smallest self-sacrifice. We are complacently arrogant, and not sincere enough to acquire the virtues we boast of (*Charritrapuja*). Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, to whom was dedicated the essay where these ideas were enunciated, was the exact opposite of all the smallness that engulfed his fellowmen, and, according to Tagore, remained a loner facing obstructions throughout his life. A fact that Tagore regretted but was not surprised about because to him Vidyasagar,

with his courage, simplicity and truthfulness was closer to a simple Santhal ("Manush") than the contemporary Bengali ("Baangaali"). Rabindranath differentiates again between an "Manush" and a "Baangaali" when he hails the phenomena of Iswarchandra being not a "Baangaali" but a "Manush" in a land where God has created crores of Bengalis who forfeited the term "Manush;" the "Baangaali" never wanted to be the conventional good boy.

Tagore's incessant self-questioning and analysis threw up in bold relief the inherent cunning and lack of discipline that the Bengali possessed. He admitted that his fellow men were endowed with a sharp cleverness that was good for splitting hairs but useless for solving knotty problems. This sharpness, like a thoroughbred passing the winning post, won arguments but was unable to move the wheels of action (*Chaaritrapuja*). Tagore was frank about the average Bengali intellect being only good for minute arguments and not meant for practical use; it had the sharpness of a thin blade of grass, but not the strength of a weapon (*Europejatrir Diary*).

The true worth of a person lies in what he has achieved through hard work and intellect, and not in the glorious past of his ancestors. Rabindranath had observed the Bengali's preoccupation and vanity regarding his past. His comments on the Bengali staying put within the four walls of his house and boasting of the courageous deeds of his forefathers, and of the valiant Aryan streak (*Duranta Asha*) in him are rather apt and still valid. In *Bangabir* he castigates this attitude.

Mokshamuller bolechhe arya;
Sei sune sab chherechi karya,
Ke balite chaie mora nahi bir,
Praman, je taar rayechhe gabhir,
Purba Purush chhunriten teer.
Sakshi Vedovyas.

(Ever since Max Muller termed us Aryans we have given up work. And he who has the audacity to call us cowards should remember that Vedovyas has mentioned our ancestors to be excellent archers !)

The "democratic Bengali" does not believe in the equality of

the races and has continued over the years to believe unhesitatingly in the absolute superiority of the Bengali over others. Tagore locates the root of this 'superiority complex' to ignorance and a smallness of mind (*Chithipatra*) that makes him shut his eyes to realities and regard himself as greater and better than others. The typical Bengali contempt for the "ignorance" of others comes through in Tagore's lines, again from *Bangabir*.

Murkha jahara kichhu parenai,
Tara eto katha bujhibe ki chhai,
Han karia thake, kobhu tule hai,
Buk phethe jai momo,
Ha ashikshito abhaga swadesh,
Lajjaye mukh dhako,

(We wince at the colossal ignorance of our fellow countrymen and hide our faces in shame).

Strewn throughout his writings are his laments and his shame of the Bengali bragging, of their involvement in petry politics, their groupism, their intertia. The quality that enabled people to unite easily was lacking in the Bengali (*Patrabali*), he says. A weak race is unable to trust otehrs. This lack of unity has been responsible for many problems. A Bengali did not know how to get along with his fellomen (*Patrabali*). Tagore thinks that malaria is the right disease for a race crippled by poverty of character, lack of perseverance and mental inertia (*Malaria*).

According to him, we (Bengalis) are ever eager to provide unwanted advice. We are equally adroit in finding faults in others and in establishing our superiority over them (*Sahitya*) In *Alasya-o-Sahitya* he writes that so far none had the courage to say that a Bengali was hardworking. He falt that his compatriots were extremely mistrustful. The Bengali's habit of not seeing beyond his own small sphere of interest (the predictably route to office and promotion) is also criticised by Tagore in the same essay.

He has also pointed out the gap between the Bengali *Bhadralok* and people from the lower strata of society. To Tagore, education embraced all sections of society and was not confined to the *Bhadralok* for whom the illiterate underprivileged

were (and still are) *Chhotook* (*Palliseva*). The mind of the educated class was not rooted to the soil. It had the characteristic pathological contempt for the illiterate, and it was difficult for the *Bhadralok* to overcome class barriers with real respect and affection (*Pallirunnati*). It was impossible for the Bengali *Bhadralok* to forget that his education made him superior, and obeisance from the underprivilged was taken for granted. That is why the village farmer did not trust the *Bhadralok* (in spite of 'political consciousness' and big talk of rural awareness this attitude is still prevalent).

Tagore chastises Bengalis for an excess of emotion that, instead of converting itself into a vital creative force, remained a luxury (*Bangabhasa-o-sahitya*), The Bengali was a drermer of dreams that did not galvanise him into action, but led on to lethargy. Tagore draws a piture of the daily existence of an average. Bengali with remarkable accuracy. A day in the life of a Bhadralok went like this; the easlier part of the morning was spent in sombre silence with the *hookah* (cigarette and tea today); the second part of the day was earmarked for office; the evenings were spent at games of cards. The Bengali was untouched by the surge of events around him. This isolation was, according to Tagore, due to the dichotomy of our education in relation to society, our ideals and actual character, intention and action. This dichotomy prevented us from assimilating ourselves with our surroundings. That is why a Bengali could rattle off tales of heroism and courage, but remain a coward in real life. He knew the latest trends in aesthetics but was unable to create beauty in any form in his own life (*Bangla Jatiyo Sahitya*)).

In his novels Rabindranath's ideal characters were introspective and sensitive (Nikhilesh in *Gharebaire*, Pareshbabu in *Gora*), of tremendous character and free of dogma (Jathama hasaya in *Chaturanga*); they were men of vigorous action and. perception (Gora in *Gora*). His women rose above their circumstances to achieve a broadness of vision (Anandamayee and Sucharita in *Gora* and Ella in *Charadhaya*), possessing a delicate sensitivity (Kumu in *Jogajog*), courage and understanding (Damini in *Chaturanga*), and a rare dignity (Labanya in *Shesherkabita*). Through their creation, Tagore perhaps felt sense of fulfilment that he did not get from real characters around him. Often he wished that there would be more Bengalis with courage, liberal

humanism, with a striving for greatness and a sense of duty towards that which was worthwhile (*Chithipatra*). Perhaps this prompted him to moot the idea of Shantiniketan, where not only would young minds be unfettered in the freedom of natural surroundings, they would also develop a liberal humanism that would narrow the gap between man and man (Vishwabharati).

Unfortunately, his ideal of liberal humanism has not even been followed in the place of his dreams. Regretfully Shantiniketan has produced less men like Nikhilesh and Jathamahasay and Gora ("Manush" and more men ("Baangaali") who fit his description of "*Bara bara chhotolokdiger chokhe aanka gandi*" (Big little men with closed visions), which he wrote in *Chithipatra*. If the Bengalish had really admired him and understood him then they would have remembered him through his works and his ideals and not through a mass display of feelings that he was so averse to (*Charitrapuja*). Forty years after his death, we Bengalis have not qualified foi the term "Manush". We remember Tagore with what he termed rs "*baroyari kolahol*" (mass hysteria). The kind of remembrance that he found meaningless, empty and shameful (*Chaaritrapuja*). Yet, every year, between May and August the Bengali will continue to remember him, noisily through rituals that have lost all significance. Had we not elevated him to Gurudev, then he would have lived on maybe in fewer hearts but as a meaningful farce. Perhaps it is convenient for the Bengali to turn Tagore into an idol, for a true appraisal of reality as Tagore himself pointed out again and again, is far away from the Bengali character. Even today.

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THE PLAYS OF TAGORE

LILA RAY*

"One and only one idea has imperceptibly taken possession of all my work up to the present, appearing in various guises, the idea that the faite is not limited by its boundaries, that it is possible to perceive and treval depthless depths in the smallest particle." —Tagore.

Valmiki Pratibha was written in 1881. A song drama, it was the poet's first play. *Prakritir Pratishodh*, which followed four years later, dispensed with music. Both were performed at the private theatre of the Tagore family at Jorasanko. The history of the Bengali theatre is divided by historians into two periods. The first was the era of wealthy private theatros and lasted from the beginning of the 19th century down to 1872. The second dates from 1872 to the present and is the era of the public theatre.

The private theatres were invaluable in the development of the theatre but they could not accommodate the growing audiences and were closed to the general public in the early eighties. They did not go out of existence, however, and continued to fulfil the function of Little Theatres everywhere as proving grounds for new work. Throughout his life Tagore had a well-equipped stage and a skilled group of performers with which to work. His elder brother, Jyotirindranath, was a well-known dramatist and wrote

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thirty-two plays of his own. And the poet's home was one of the centres of the intellectual and artistic life of the day.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century was full of intellectual ferment. Religious and social reform occupied the best minds and political unrest, combined with a growing nationalism, fostered revolt against all that was oppressive, constricting or authoritarian. The theatre was intimately associated with this stimulating activity but the passage of the Dramatic Performances Act in 1876 checked its growth. Private theatres were exempt and continued to develop unhampered. Few of Tagore's plays have found popularity with the professional theatre though at one time *Bisarjan* was the best loved drama in Bengal.

HIS EARLY TRAGEDIES

The first three of the poet's tragedies, *Raja-o-Rani*, *Bisarjan* and *Malini* were written in 1890, 1891 and 1895 respectively and belong to his first style. The first two are written in blank verse with some scenes in prose, the third musical. Tagore used four differing techniques, combining them in various ways, the song drama, blank verse, dramatic verse and the dance drama. His historical plays and the tragedies are, for the most part in blank verse. *Dak Ghar* is in prose.

Raja-o-Rani (later rewritten as *Tapati*) is the poet's nearest approach to domestic tragedy although the chief concern of the play is the relationship between a rules and his rebellious subjects, a theme which is fully worked out later in *Rakta Karabi* and *Mukta Dhara*. As a domestic tragedy the setting is too romantic to be realistic and the story, though based on a slight historical foundation, is largely imaginary. Finding the king's passion for her is so possessive that it interferes with his duties a ruler, Sumitra, the queen, leaves him; going back to her own people, the Kashmiris. It is not until she is dead that the king can see her and love her for what she truly was.

Bisarjan and *Malini* are concerned with the conflict of incompatible ideals, a conflict which, in *Prakritir Protishodh*, concludes happily in the conversion of the ascetic, but here ends in tragedy. In *Bisarjan*, Jaysingh, the adopted son of the arrogant and bigoted priest, is driven to sacrifice his own blood on the

altar of the Goddess Kali in what is a magnificent and symbolic act of atonement. In his doubt and hesitation Jaysingh reminds us a little of Hamlet and the ambitious prince, Nakshatra Ray, so easily tempted to conspire against the life of the King, his father, has echoes of Macbeth but there the resemblance ends. The self-immolation of Jaysingh is a wholly Indian way of resolving a conflict.

As a play *Bisarjan* shows some of the faults common to the Bengali theatre of the time. There are too many characters, too little stage action and too many episodes. This is caused by a mistaken concept of action. Increasing the number of episodes does not necessarily increase the action nor heighten the tension. On the contrary it results in a multiplicity that is confusing. What is required in good drama is more action about fewer things. I was for this reason that the Greeks restricted the time of a play to twenty-four hours. There must be concentration upon the inevitability of a single event. If the characters have to describe and comment upon too much off-stage action they are apt, beyond a certain point, to become involved in a swirl of words. In the traditional Indian theatre actors tend to stand around and orate. This is a lesson which Tagore was to learn very quickly and these faults are absent from his later works. He became, in fact, a master of stage action and his study of symbolic movement led him to develop the dance drama, a form which he pushed to the peak of effectiveness in *Natir Puja*, *Shyama* and *Chandalika*.

The action of *Natir Puja* is confined to a single day, the full-moon day of the month of Vaisakh, and the birth of the Buddha is to be celebrated in the evening. But the king. Ajatasatru, has banned Buddhism and the altar marking the sacred spot in the garden where the Buddha once sat has been demolished. Worship is forbidden on pain of death. He further commands Srimati to profane the place still more by dancing there at the vesper hour. Srimati is a devotee of the Buddha. The climax of the play is her impassioned and aweinspiring dance. One by one she removes her jewels and costly garments, casting each in turn on the broken altar as an offering until she stands revealed in the simple yellow robe of a Buddhist nun and pays the penality.

Chandalika tells the story of an untouchable girl who falls

in love with Ananda, Buddha's favourite disciple, when he asks her for a drink of water. She uses witchcraft to win him but is so moved by the sadness and paleness of his face as he approaches that she repents and foregoes her triumph. Chandalika is perhaps the most fully psychologically realised of all his characters. For the most part he is content to show with broad strokes how tragle forces work out of a situation but he prevents emotion from degenerating into sentimentality by balancing it with wit. In *Shyama* a beautiful courtesan of the Buddhist period sends a young boy who is devoted to her to his death in order to save the life of the man she loves. Her lover discovers what she has done and finds himself unable to forgive her.

MORALITY PLAYS

In these plays the crisis is internal and the action develops around an emotional need or an inner change of attitude. Man is the central figure and emphasis is on character. In this sence they are modern morality plays, for the poet is pre-occupied with the development of the moral man. This is true even of *Chitrangada* which at first appears to be only a romantic comedy combining song, drama and dance like a seventeenth century masque. Its real theme, however, is the true nature of beauty. Chitrangada, the warrior princess who loves Arjuna, fails to win him because she lacks sensual beauty. At her entreaty Madana, the god of love, grants her physical beauty for a year and Arjuna is delighted with her. But before the year is out he begins to tire and reports of the feats of the warrior princess give rise in him to a profound admiration for her. Chitrangada then reveals herself in her true from, he loves her all the more and the play ends happily.

There is a hint here of a theme which the poet explored fully in *Arup Ratan* (a later version of *Raja*). In this play, written when the poet was at the height of his powers, the king is invisible to the outer world of objects thot can be held, fondled and put away in treauries. He is represented on the stage only by a voice. His queen, Sudarsana, seeks for him everywhere but fails to find and, in her impatient eagerness, garlands an earthly king whose beauty of features fascinates her. In the emotional turmoil which results, wars are waged and kingdoms plunged into flames. At last the proud queen is forced from her palace and walked the roads humbly, happy at last in the companionship of the true king who

speaks to her from the fire. Sudarsana's search for self-knowledge, a knowledge which is also spiritual knowledge, provides the drama. There is dilemma and a wrong choice is made from which she extricates herself through grief and suffering. The presence of the invisible king as a chracter makes this a mystery as well as a morality play.

The invisible king of *Arup Ratan* is a king behind a screen in *Rakta Karabi.* This king rules in a more impersonal and authoritarian manner. Ranjan, a young idealist, rebels and the king's subjects rally around him. The conflict is realistic and political, the crisis external. The inevitability of the climax arises out of the sequence of events and the action, for all its symbolism, is outers. not inner. Ranjan is killed, much as Supriya in Malini is killed. In character and type he resembless Supriya. The sympathy and attraction Supriya felt for Malini has developed into the passsionate love of Ranjan and Nandini.

The king of *Malini* who is a somewhat negative thought benign influence takes on definition and strength in the screened king who, after Ranjans's death, breaks through his screen to lead his subjects himself in their revolt against his vassals.

Mukta Dhara is also symbolic and its subject appears to me to be, not so much a revolt against the machine as some critics declare, as a protest against the misuse of scientific power by men in authority. In its harshness it recalls Eugene O' Neil. The king of Uttarkut has a dam built across the Mukta by his engineer in order to cut-off the water supply of the people of Sivtarai who have become restive and unruly. In this way he hopes to subjugate them completely. The people of Sivtarai start satyagraha under the leadership of the saintly Dhananjay. There is famine in the country, the result of the water shortage, and they refuse to to pay their taxes. The crown prince is sent to subdue them. He wins them over by his concern for their welfare and breaks open a pass through the mountains in order that they may have access to the outside world.

Dissatisfied with this result the king sends his brother-in-law whose opperssion, added to the hardship of the famine, quickly drives the people to desperation. The crown prince, disgraced and imprisioned, discovers he is a foundling and, therefore, belongs not to one but to all. He is released and the prison set on fire but

he refuses to flee. Insted, having come to know of a secret flaw in the construction of the dam he destroys it, knowing that in doing so he will himself be swept away in the rush of the released waters. Here, once again we meet the self-immolating hero of *Bisarjan*, drawn on a much larger scale, in whose death humanism triumphs.

If *Mukta Dhara* and *Rakta Karabi* are the most political of all Tagore's plays they are also perhaps the most European. *Rakta Karabi* is a plain-spoken protest against regimentation, bureaucracy and authoritarianism, and *Mukta Dhara* against the abuse of mechanical power. They are tragedies. Tagore attacked the same problems in his farces. The lightness of this from enabled him to be even more merciless. In *Bisarjan* we are made to feel a certain pity for the priest Raghupati who, in his frenzy, causes the death of the one person he really loves. His sudden and ruthless awakening is the real climax of the play. And the unrepentant strength of Kshemankar in *Malini* arouses a certain awe.

But what can be more barbed than the wit of *Tasher Desh*, the farce in which the poet's comic powers fuse with his fantasy and the symbolism of his maturity ? Part fairy-tale, part fantasy, partly a comedy of manners, it describes the adventures of a young and charming prince and his friend in a kingdom regulated by rules so absurdly strict that the inhabitants, from the king down, behave as artificially as cards and dress like them. There is no pity here. The prince is frightened by no shibboleths, respects, no persons or things and takes nothing seriously, laughing at inconsistencies and superficialities. His triumph is complete.

COMEDY OF ERRORS

Shesh Raksha is a comedy of errors, written without music, in plain lively prose and its subject is the late of several young couples in love. Another play of the same kind, equally delightful, is *Chirakumar Sabha*, the subject being a bachelors' club. Both of these are products of his youth, *Shesh Raksha* being a revised version of *Goray Galad*, and are written for sheer fun. In these plays the poet takes people as they are and finds them interesting. Here is realistic comedy at its best. Generally speaking, love interest is minor in Tagore's plays but he succeeds in rousing and holding the interest of the audience remarkably well without it,

Is Tagore didactic ? Is the dramatic spirit lost in his symbolism, mysticism and desire to preach ? Tagore definitely does use the drama as an instrument of social and religious change. Change is reflected in his plays as well as the conventions, habits and beliefs which he disliked. He leaves the spectator in no doubt as to where his sympathies lie. His attitude to society is critical and he is quick to perceive folly. His characters represent the ideas and ideas, in the conflict of which he sees drama. Of the two brothers in *Achalayatan*, for instance, one is the symbol of revolt, the iconoclast, and the other is the symbol of true tradition, the builder who sets to work afresh among the ruins. Of this play the poet writes : "The sense through which our soul comes to know itself, transcends conflict, breaking through the walls of our comfort, convenience and habit. The advent of the realisation which sets us free is announced to the beat of drums so terrifying that we mistake it for our enemy. We do not discover what it is until we have fought with it."

Tagore was fond of stories with religious associations and retained their religious intesrest and significance, interpreting them in terms not of orthodox dogma, but according to the new enlightened humanism that grew to be such powerful formative force in Indian intellectual life during the ninetteeth century. It was a humanism which regards sympathy, Pity, mercy, love, tenderness and friendliness as the natural religion of man.

HUMAN ENOUGH

Are his characters mere abstractions, not human enough ? No, they are human enough, lovingly so. Tagore saw in the child the sweet embodiment of his ideal religion and its symbol. The climax of *Valmiki Pratibha* forms around a child's innocent unoffending figure. In *Prakritir Pratishodh* a little orphaned outcast girl lost by the wayside recalls an ascetic to a world of beauty he has scorned. In *Dakghar*, a poignantly realistic tragedy, the child dies, stifled by the weight of adult ignorance and stupidity. A child working at sums on a beautiful day in order to pay his debt to a heartless merchant is the story of *Saradotsav*. In *Phalguni*, a group of children set out in search of the ancient of days, the old man Death. When they find him they discover that he is no other than their own boy leader, Life. About this play

the poet said, "To know life truly one must make its acquaintance through death." The little girl grows up to be Malini, the princess who turns to Buddhism, the religion of mercy, in revolt against the ancestral customs of her country, to be Nandini in *Rakta Karabi* and to dance to her death in *Natir Puja*. Aparna, in *Bisarjan*, is the symbol of all the animal sacrifices held in the temple.

Another familiar character we have met in Dhananjay, the saintly mendicant of *Mukta Dhara*. He appeared for the first time in the jolly grandfather of *Saradotsav*, in *Prayaschitta*, *Dakghar*, *Achalayatan*. Sometimes, as in *Phalguni*, he is a *baul* (a wandering minstrel who sings mystic songs). He is always happy-hearted wise, the friend and counsellor of the oppressed and suffering, the gay enemy of injustice, the comforter, the commentor, the sharer of burdens. He acts often as the poet's mouthpiece, instructing the audience and interpreting the action. He is a character which is dramatically very effective and has come to be inseparably associated with Tagore's works. He develops into the guru before whom walls crumble and at whose approach doors and windows fly open.

Tagore's versatility, both in technique and subject matter, as the rapid survey makes plain, was extraordinary. The mystery play, the moral play, the history play, romantic tragedy, realistic tragedy, realistic comedy, romantic comedy, farce, the song drama and the dance drama—he wrote them all. What is missing ? Burlesque. Vulgarity was repulsive to him.

But his characters are less varied and roles tend to be repeated though circumstances change.

There is no doubt he absorbed all the influences, Eastern and Western, that came his way and made something out of them which is entirely his own creation. He shared with the popular *jatra* (folk theatre) and *kathak* (reciter of sacred tales) tradition as well as the sophisticated Calcutta theatre a liking for stories taken from scriptures and he shared his interest in symbolic action with the former. The influence of the Sanskrit dramatic tradition is most noticeable in his seasonable plays where a *rapport* is established with nature that is found nowhere outside *Sakuntala* and *Meghaduta*. For him man's world and the world of nature are identical and he gives this feeling expression with great delicacy and suggestiveness. "My work", he says in

Phalguni, "is not to be understood so much as heard, like a flute". That is to say, without seeing his plays, without listening to his characters sing and talk, it is imppossible either to understand or enjoy the meaning and pleasure he conveys.

DRAMATIC TESTS

A drama can be judged only by dramatic tests, for no play is until it has been performed. Tagore, as I pointed out in the beginning, had his own stage to test them on. He never hesitated to revise or rewrite his work and many versions of his plays exist. On the stage they are, whem performed well, eminently effective.

Is his work likely to be accepted as a model by future Indian dramatists ? I think his influence will certainly grow as his work is more widely understood. All the implications of his symbolism and his subject-matter are still very far from being being understood. Imitation in the circumstances, will be difficult and dangerous. Tagore is first and last a poet and all his drama is poetic drama. And he also is a mystic. This gives his work an elusiveness and a delicacy that is inimitable. He strives as he says in the passage quoted at the head of this paper, to make the invisible visible, to reveal the infinite in the finite. How can one imitate a person who sings :

"Not with beauty shall I charm you;
I shall woo you with love,
Not with my arms shall I open the door :
I shall unlatch it with song."

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THE POETRY OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

HUMAYUN KABIR*

In May 1961, we shall be celebrating the centenary of the birth of Rabindrath Tagore. Great as are his contributions in many fields of human endeavour, he will be remembered most as a pre-eminent man of letters. In sheer quantity of work few writers can equal him. His writings include more than one thousand poems and over two thousand songs in addition to a large number of short stories, novels, dramatic work and essays on religion, society, education, politics and literature. In a word, his interests embrace every subject which is of interest to man. In quality, he has reached heights which have been trodden, and that too only rarely, by only the noblest among men. When one remembers the enormous range and extraordinary quality of his work, it is not surprising that his admirers should acclaim him as perhaps the greatest literary figure in history.

One can never account for the emergence of a genius, for genius is always something in the nature of an exception. It is at the same time the function of genius to find expression for the emotions and ideas which stir in the unconscious and subconscious mind of the race. A bond is thus established between the genius and his people, and helps to explain the admiration and wonder with which the genius is greeted when he appears. People find in his words and actions an embodiment of the feelings and aspirations which they have dimly felt but could not express. The

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genius also benefits by such relation. He derives his strength and energy from the inchoate feelings and vague aspirations stirring in the racial mind. Tagore is typical of genius in both respects. His uniqueness is beyond question and at the same time he is deeply rooted in the people whom he lived for and loved.

Tagore was fortunate in both the time and the place of his birth. The advent of the West had disturbed the placid waters of Indian life and a new awakening was sweeping throughout the land. Its initial impact had dazzled the Indian mind and made many of the early reformers blind imitators of the West. The first uncritical admiration was wearing off when Tagore was born, but the ideals brought by the West were still active and strong. At the same time, there was growing recognition of the values of India's own heritage. The time was, therefore, opportune for the emergence of a genius who could unite in himself eastern and western values.

It was not only the time but also the place which was opportune. Bengal had felt the impact of the West more vividly than perhaps any other part of India. In Bengal, the new stirrings of life were most marked in Calcutta. To this city and its environs came not only adventurers of trade and war but also administrators, missionaries and more important still men who were born teachers. And they came not only from the British Isles but also from France, Holland and other parts of Europe. Russia was in those days far and remote, but we still find among the early pioneers of the Calcutta theatre a Russian name. The meeting of East and West on India's shores was thus, for Tagore both a fact and an ideal.

The circumstances of his family also helped in the flowering of Tagore' genius. A pioneer of the Indian awakening, his family accepted the new challenges without giving up the rich heritage of the past. As a Brahmin, Tagore easily and naturally imbibed the traditions of ancient India and was deeply influenced not only by the literature but by the religious and cultural ideals embedded in Sanskrit. As a member of the landed class, he was familiar with the ways of life of mediaeval India and could accept without question the composite culture of the Moghal courts. In both these respects, he was perhaps not different from other Brahmin landlords of the day, but unlike many of them, he was also sensitive to the new currents of the modern world. Steeped in the

traditions of ancient and mediaeval India, his family was at the same time one of the pioneers of western education and the western way of life. This family background explains both the richness of Tagore's Indian heritage and the absence of any conflict or hidden stress in his mind. His was an integrated personality free from the divisions which sapped the energy of so many of his contemporaries.

Tagore was indeed fortunate that he could accept the challenge of the new without discarding the values of ancient and mediaeval India. Those who had been weaned away from their own culture and depended too much on the inspiration of the West lost their roots in national life. Loss of contact with the people diminished the sources of their inspiration and reduced their spiritual capital. This explains why many of them, in spite of undoubted talent and gifts. could not make a deep or abiding impact on Indian life and letters. They lacked the energy which genius derives from its identification with the inmost urges of the race.

There is one other factor which helped Tagore in establishing his identity with the people. Quite early in life, he lived for years in a boat among the sand-banks of the Padma and thus, came into intimate contact with the rural culture of the country. The quality of life he experienced in these regions was rooted in the primeval and ancient history of the land. Its culture goes back even deeper into the life of tne people than the urban culture developed in the middle ages. Tagore thus secured an entry into a world unknown to the townsman and struck roots in some of the deepest levels of the racial consciousness. His contact with the abundant life of the common man is the source of his exuberant creative powers and explains why his inspiration never failed.

In considering Tagore's life and work, one is again and again struck by the amazing vitality of his genius. He was essentially a poet, but his interests were not confined to poetry. We have already mentioned the diversity of his literary work, but literature in his widest sense could not exhaust his energies. He was also a musician and a painter of very high order. In addition, he made notable contributions to religious and educational thought, to politics and social reform, to moral regeneration and economic reconstruction. In fact, his achievements in these fields are so great that they mark him out as one of the makers of modern

India.

Tagore's greatest strength lies in his sense of the unity of life. No bifurcation of ideals or culture divided his energies. It is, therefore, not surprising that he should recognise no separation between art and life. The close of the nineteenth century saw in Europe the triumph of a new aesthetic cult. There were many who held that are must be pursued for its own sake, regardless of its relation to life. The ivory tower became the symbol and type of artistic endeavour. The poet and the artist, said the votaries of this cult, were first and foremost dreamers. Tagore never accepted a conception of art divorced from life. He pursued beauty, but as a manifestation of life. Simultaneously, he held that life has no grace unless it is instinct with beauty. The religion of the poet was for Tagore also the religion of man.

Tagore is one of the supreme lyric poets of the world. Sincerity of feeling and vividness of imagery combine with the music of his verse to give us poems that haunt the reader long after the actual words are forgotten. This fusion of feeling, imagery and music showed very early in his life. *Nirjharer Swapnabhanga* (The Awakening of the Fountain) was composed before he was twenty but still remains one of the supreme lyrics in Bengali, or indeed any language. The poem is remarkable not only for its music and intensity, but also for the boldness of its images. What is perhaps even more significant is the fusion of nature and man in an indissoluble unity. This identity of nature and man remained one of the most characteristic traits of Tagore's poetry throughout his life.

Perhaps there has never been another poet who loved the earth so passionately. There is hardly a single mood of day or night or of the circling seasons which Tagore has not sung in his poetry. The sights and sounds of Bengal and especially her rural landscape are caught again and again in magic verse. Since the days of Kalidasa, Indian poets have revelled in the glories of the rainy season. Tagore has also caught the varying moods of the monsoons in a hundred songs and poems. In fact, his poems and songs of the rain have become a part of our national heritage. The expectancy of the parched soil just before the advent of the rains. the heavy smells which rise from the damp earth after the first shower, the thrill of life in the green shoots of the newly growing grass, the dark clouds which dim the clear morning light

and charge with magic the evening shadows, the unceasing patter of rain in the silence of the night, these and a hundred other pictures are brought vividly to our mind in Tagore's magic verse. He has also woven into them the joys and sorrows of the human heart till nature and man reflect one another's moods and lose their separate identity.

Nor has Tagore neglected the other seasons. Autumn and spring are reflected in their many moods. The wild energy of early spring, the sense of liberation from the bonds of winter and the quick vivid burst of colour and sound are reflected in many a poem and song. They reflect not only the joyousness and strength of spiring but also its sense of fullness and impermanent glory. Autumn with its sense of fullness and maturity and its clear rain-washed skies has played a special role in many of Tagore's poems. One of his most successful musical plays is built round the theme of autumn with its sense of liberation from the pressure of immediate work. Even winter and summer have not been forgotten. In one of his most famous poems, Tagore has conceived of summer as an austere ascetic who with bated breath waits for the advent of new life.

It is not only the beauty of nature that bound Tagore so intimately to the earth. He also loved the earth as the abode of man, and has poured out his love of man in numberless poems and songs. There is hardly any feeling of the human heart to which he has not responded. The intimate play of love in all its nuances of joy and sorrow is crystallised in unforgettable words. Sorrow and anguish and the exquisite agony of hopeless waiting are reflected with a fidelity that leaves one breathless. There is also a sense of the eternal presence of nature as a companion of human emotions. He know that life is full of strife and striving and the world is far from prefect, but he also knew that the imperfections and the faults, the sufferings and the longings of our earthly life make it the more dear to man.

For Tagore, the earth is not only a stage where man strives after a fuller life, but also a loving mother that watches over his efforts to find a richer meaning in all experience. Tagore was no ascetic and deliberately repudiated the ideal which seeks to deny the multitudinous life of the body. Nor was he an epicure or a hedonist, for ke felt that the real glory of life lies in the constant striving for a fuller and richer experience. This yearning for fuller

life recurs again and again in his poems. In *Basundhara* (The World) he sings of the abounding life of the earth and man's kinship to the swelling tide of primeval energy. In one of his most famous lyrics, *Svarga Hoite Biday* (Farewell to Heaven) he compares the passionless calm of heavenly bliss with the exquisite flow of joy and paln in earthly experience. Tagore leaves us in no doubt where his own preference lies.

Tagore's love for man finds one of its most exquisite expressions in the poetry he has written for children. All men have in them an element of the child, for without it they cannot live. The energy, the spontaniety and the wonder of childhood and even more its power to transmute the commonplace by the touch of imagination fade with the growing years but unless some traces of its magic remain in our hearts, we could not endure the hardship and monotony of our daily existence. It is not only in a physical sense that our march from childhood is a march towards death. Even the most hardened criminal feels an instinctive sympathy for the innocence and helplessness of the child. In the case of a poet, it is not only sympathy but identification. And the greater the poet, the more complete the identification, for sensibility is more important to him than sense.

One of the supreme poets of the world, Tagore keenly felt and expressed vividly the moods and fancies of the growing child. Children respond in a way that few adults can to the colours and shapes and forms and sounds of the outside world. They have their own sorrows and joys that are as real to them as the joys and sorrows of adult life are to the adult. In poem after poem, Tagore has expressed the sensationt as well as the fellings of childhood with the sensitiveness and reverent wonder of the child. He was caught in these poems the innocence and helplessness of the young as vividly as their longing and wistfulness. His complete identification with the wishes and hopes and fears and dreams of the young is as characteristic of these poems as an utter simplicity and directness that can come only under the stress of the deepest emotion.

Tagore lost his wife when he was about forty and soon after two of his children were stricken with mortal illness. One of them was a son who had inherited much of Tagore's gifts of body and mind. As he nursed them in the knowledge that they would not live, he wrote for them exquisite lyrics into which went all the

longing and anguish of his bleeding heart. Full of tender whimsicality and a strong wistfulness, in them live his own past and future that would never be theirs. The agony he could not express lest it darken the few days left to them gives to these poems an intensity and poignancy that has rarely, if ever, been equalled.

Tagore was essentially a lyric poet, but his love for nature and his sense of kinship with all life gives a rich dramatic quality to many of his poems. With his deep humaity and passionate yearning for justice, it is not surprising that he should be attracted by social and political themes. The occasion may be a particular experience, but whatever he touches is lifted to a higher plane of universal meaning. He has written some bitter satires against the prejudices and superstitions of his own people, but with a few rare exceptions, they also show how his essential humanism rises above his indignation and wrath. Even his patriotic poems are instinct with a feeling for all humanity. For Tagore, patiiotism was a positive quality of love for his own people and land, never a negative attitude of hatred for the foreigner. One of the finest examples of this is seen in his poem, *Guru Govinda*, where passionate love for one's country and people is seen to deepen into love for all mankind. In fact. Tagore never recognised that anything human could be foreign to him. In his famous lyric *Prabashi* (The Wanderer), he declares that man has his home in every clime and his country in every region of the world. This sense of identification with all mankind has found one of its finest expressions in our National Anthem where Tagore invokes the Lord of the heart of all the peoples of the world as the arbiter of India's destiny.

Tagore's love for man unconsciously and inevitably merged into love of God. We have already indicated how nature and man were united in his imaginative grasp of experience. Nor did he ever think of divinity as something apart and remote from human life. For him God was essentially love. The love of the mother for her child or of the lover for the beloved are only instances of the supreme love that is God. And this love expresses itself not only in the ecstatic devotion of the mystic but also in the routine of everyday life of the common man. Tagore repeatedly declared that God is to be realised in the common relations of life and in the daily work which sustains

the world. There is no doubt that Tagore was deeply influenced by both Vaishnava poetry and Sufi mysticism. His poems and songs are full of images and themes which remind us of ecstatic experience, but we also find a keen sense of the facts of daily life. His words and phrases have an authenticity of expression that can be born only out of personal experience. Nuances of feeling are fused with moods of nature in a way which has few parallels in the world's poetry.

A word may be said about the quality of his mystic poetry. When "Gitanjali" was first published in an English translation, the West hailed it for its message of pease and love in a war-torn and embittered world. There is no doubt that the poems in that slender volume are charged with a deep sense of peace and calm. They have an ineffable quality of beauty and remoteness in spite of the familiarity of the themes and the simplicity of the language and imagery. To readers in Europe and America, they came with the delighted wonder of a new discovery, but to readers of Tagore in Bengali the poems are only a natural culmination of his earlier writing. The love of nature and man had by unconsious steps merged into the love of God. Deep personal suffering had given a mellowness to his images and themes. Growing experience had revealed to him the undoubted truth that all our life is surrounded by mystery. The wonder and pathos of human life had brought a new sympathy and understanding to his works of imagination.

One characteristic of many of these later lyrics of Tagore is their utter simplicity. In his earlier poems, he drew largely upon the rich associations and assonance of Sanskrit. Many of them recapture the theme and spirit of classical Indian literature. He has no doubt often given a new twist to an old situation, but the affiliation with the rich mythology of India is unmistakable. In his later poems dedicated to man and God, he has shed all adornment. The simplest of human situations are used to reveal his experience of the divinity. The language also takes on the directness and simplicity of common speech. In many of these later and lyrics, we stand face to face with the immediacy of experience. Words have become transparent and like the notes of purest music speak to us with a vividness and force that often leave us speechless.

Nor must we forget that Tagore was throughout his life an

earnest and intrepid seeker of truth. The vigour of his intellect pierced the facade of sham and hypocrisy which we often build to hide our poverty. The massive and masculine quality of his writing has remained largely unknown to those who have not read him in the original. For one thing, the translations have been selective and have left out some of the most powerful examples of his intellectual sweep. For another, many of the translations are in fact adaptations and have toned down the rugged strength of the original.

The concern with man and his fate showed quite early in Tagore's life. In *Sandhya-Sangit*, one of his earliest book of poems. we already find him brooding over the problem of existence. He also shows a precocious awareness of the unloveliness which results when man's selfishness masquerades as love. The philosophical strain gains in depth and intensity in *Naivedya*, but it is perhaps in *Balaka* that we have the finest fusion of intellect and emotion. Some of the poems of *Balaka* reveal an integration of thought and feeling which has transformed metaphysical speculation into the purest lyric poetry.

Tagore was reaching after new experiences and new expressions almost to the last day of his life. In his sixties, there was an ouburst of lyric poetry whic can compare with the best work of his early youth. The poems of this period reveal a new note of deep feeling and passion purified by suffering. The intimate and personal quality of these poems is replaced in the next decade by a rich and mellow humanism. The exuberance of his earlier writings is replaced by a rare economy of thought and expression. There is a sense of power and assurance in some of his last poems which astonish us by their intellectual vigour. There is also a new questioning of the ultimate ends of existence matched with a calm acceptance of life with all its imperfections and its promise.

Tagore experimented uot only with the theme and subject but also with the form of poetry. He was never afraid of the influence of his predecessors. He has however, transmuted whatever he has touched. Tagore had the greatest admiration for Kalidasa, but even when he has taken a theme from him, Tagore has given it a twist that makes his treatment essentially modern. He borrowed freely from the traditional Vaishnava Poetry of Bengal and has himself acknowledged his indebtedness to a poet

like Biharilal. No man can escape his environment or his age. Attempts to do so lead more often than not to failure, and are in fact generally a symptom of the poet's lack of self-confidence. Tagore grew under the inflnence of contemporary society, but the very process of growth enabled him to transcend them in course of time. Once he was sure of his medium, he did not hesitate to experiment in both the form and the matter of his poems and sought inspiration in fields of experience which had been earlier neglected in Bengali poetry. In fact, he largely obliterated the distinction between what is and what is not subject matter for a poem. In the "Kshanika", we find him selecting themes which at first sight offer no poetic possibilities but his genius lifts them above the level of the commonplace and makes them glow with the light of beauty. The claim of Wordsworth that the deepest experience can be expressed in the simplest terms and the facts of everyday life lit up with the light of mystery finds vivid justification in many of Tagore's poems of this period. Laughter and tears, humour and passion are fused to give a strange combination of wistfulness, yearning and mockery. We find in poems like *Krishna-Kali Jathasthan* or *Shekal* a wonderful interplay of human moods, emotions and feelings.

Apart from increasing intensity and concentration, the poems of his latest phase show a growing concern with the problems of the mystery of life. In spite of the great richness and variety of Bengall poetry, it has often exhibited a parochial quality. Even some of the most beautiful Vaishnava lyrics are so imbedded in local atmosphere that they cannot be lifted out of their context. One of the greatest achievements of Tagore was the introduction of a new note of urbanity and universality. They make his poems as appealing to a man in Moscow or New York as to a man in Bengal. This universal and urban note continually deepened throughout his long life and the poems of his last period show it in a most marked degree. They are also marked by the attempt at establishing a kinship with man in all his efforts and strivings, his hopes and failures, his aspirations and his daily work. The physical suffering which Tagore had to face in his last days has also been expressed with a vividness and poignacy that has rarely been equalled. The economy of expression in a poem like *Abasanna Chetanar* or *Ajasra Diner Alo* is in sharp contrast with the abandon and exuberance of the poems

of his early youth. Not only is there a sense of restraint and economy, but also a deep sense of fullness and completion in the last poems that he wrote. He had, it seems, made his peace with life and world. There is misery and suffering in the world. Existence is dogged by the fact of death, but in spite of all its imperfections life is full of significance and value. *E Jivane Sundarer* or *Madhhumay Phrithibir Dhuli* is full of the sense of the victory of life in the shadow of the valley of death.

It is difficult if not impossible to trace the development of poet's mind. In other fields of experience there is a continuity of growth which seems to conform to certain laws. In the case of poetry, inspiration waxes and wanes in a mysterious and inexplicable manner. Some of the greatest poems of a poet have been written early in his youth, while in his maturity he often produces only mediocre or conventional work. Tagore is no exception to this rule and we find that that there are exquisite poems in his earliest period and some uninspired ones in his later life. Nevertheless the way in which he sustained his inspiration throughout a long life of eighty years marks him as one of the greatest poets of all times. The energy and the vitality which enabled him to achieve this is derived from the unity and integrity of his personality. He summed up in himself the various strands which today make up India's composite culture. It was his special glory to catch and reflect the various aspects of India's myriad-sided life. He drew largely upon Sanskrit literature and enlarged both the vocabulary and the metric forms of Bengali. He effected an almost perfect fusion between Vaishnava lyricism and Sufi mystic feeling. He interpreted with sympathy and imagination the courtly ways which had developed in the wake of feudalism in the middle ages. Simultaneously he drew upon the untapped sources of the life of the common people. Images and symbols of the Bengali village are woven into the fabric of his poetry with exquisisic skill. He also incorporated into Bengali literature the ideals and moods of the West. The sense of power and speed in many of the poems of *Balaka* may well be derived from European sources. Everything is transient, is an ancient human finding, but Tagore gave to it a new significance by making it the symbol of the motion that is latent in all things.

In a word, Tagore's poetry is born out of an amalgam of

the rich classical heritage of ancient India, the spacious ways of the Mughal Court, the simple verities of the life of the common people of Bengal and the restless energy and intellectual vigour of modern Europe. He is an inheritor of all times and all cultures. It is this combination of many different strands and themes that gives to his poetry its resilience, universality and infinite appeal.

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RABINDRANATH'S APPROACH TO CONTEMPORARY WESTERN POETRY

A. ARONSON

The symbolism which lies at the root of all human language is unconscious. It reflects the "reality" of the everyday life of the speaker, When a literary critic uses symbols in his statements, he does so in order to be precise and definite where vagueness and obscurity would be fatal. The creation of new symbols in the life of societies implies a new mental vision, a new approach to human existence; and the critic when interpreting or analysing creative process that makes a poem possible will use those new symbols, taking for granted that he will be understood; for symbolic language, whether ancient or modern, reflects what we so glibly call the spirit of the age. And both the critic and the reader must needs speak the same language. What happens at present, however, is slightly different. The modern critic, in his unsuccessful attempts to be definite, uses private symbols which refer to his own personal outlook on life, to experiences that are uncommon and divorced from the everyday life of his readers. Here is an instance to the point :

> "So the poet, embroiled daily in his own decease, is caught in the toils of reality as profoundly and as hopelessly as the consumptive who drowns in his own saliva. I can give you the image of the captive of the Gaels, whose torture was to unwind his intestines around a tree; for this is the poet whose bowels are wound round the Eden tree in coils

> at once agonising and glorious : I mean every turn is a poem."[1]

This kind of imagery is not only intricate, it is also morbid; it is essentially "private" and therefore, unintelligible to most of the readers. And the deplorable fact that a majority of contemporary readers of literary criticism do not expect any intelligible statements is certainly no excuse for the critic to indulge in a continual soliloquy the meaning of which is clear to no one but himself.

These few introductory remarks were necessary for two reasons. Most of Rabindranath's criticism is undiluted symbolism. But instead of using the private symbols of a distorted mental vision, his images always refer to some fundamental human experience which gives his criticism an admirable directness and forcefulness, so sadly lacking in some of the contemporary Western critics. George Barker spoke of decease, saliva, intestines, bowels, and the Eden tree. Here is Rabindranath speaking of the same subject-matter, the creative process :

> "The child in us finds glimpses of his eternal playmate from behind the veil of things . . . . . And the playmate is reality."[2]

Rabindranath's image of the child and the playmate refers to some universally accepted experience which we do not question and which leaves us convinced.

But the second reason for quoting George Barker is that he deals with a problem of criticism which was foremost in the mind of Rabindranath throughout all his literary writing; the relationship between the poet and reality. Here is, on the one hand, a critic who speaks of the poet as helplessly "caught in the toils of reality," and here is Rabindranath who compares the poet, to a child playfully and, perhaps, unconsciously becoming award of the reality *behind* things. It this not an indication that "reality" has become a haunting nightmare, almost a neurotic obsession with the contemporary Western critic and poet, whereas with Rabindranath it is something that is above and beyond the ephemeral objects of daily existence ? Is this not also a clue to Rabindranath's own attitude to contemporary poetry in the West, accepting it when

it finds glimpses of reality behind the veil of things and rejecting it when it remains helplessly caught in the toils of reality ?

This is indeed a fundamental problem of literary criticism. For reality is not beausiful; it is, especially today, profoundly agonising, and we may rightly wonder whether it reminds us of an "eternal playmate" rather than of "the poet's bowels wound round the Eden tree." And we may also ask the relevant question, what does the contemporary artist see when he looks "behind the veil of things"? Is it not self-deception, we go on asking, to search for truth behind the living objects of nature; and will not this escape from the reality of things produce an illusion ? And Rabindranath replies, yes, it will :

> "For Art is *Maya*, it has no other explanation but that it seems to what it is."[3]

This may at first sight seem to be a candid confession that reality cannot be mastered by the artist at all, and that the poet deceives both himself and his readers. And yet a few pages later on we read in the same article :

> "An artist may paint the picture of a decrepit woman not pleasing to the eye, and yet we call it perfect when we become deeply conscious of its reality."

This does not contradict the preceding statement. The decrepit old woman *is* reality, because the artist has infused into his picture a meaning that comes from his own integrated personality; he has brought her back to life in all her ugliness and disease, and yet he has painted not the "real" woman, but the one behind the veil of things; and that is his own creation; it is neither ugly nor beautiful; it is both Reality and Illusion in one.

But it is not realism. No one was probably more opposed to realistic art in modern times than Rabindranath. For, according to him, realism is a form of artistic expression used by those who were lacking in the courage to look behind the veil of things. A representation of things "in themselves" is the aim of science not of poetry. And Rabindranath rejects the claim of those

modern poets who are caught in the toils of reality and who get helplessly lost in it :

> "But disease in a hospital is realism fit for the use of science. It is an abstraction which, it allowed to haunt literature, may assume a starling appearance because of its unreality. Such vagrant spectres do not have a proper modulation in a normal surrounding; and they offer a false proportion in their features because the proportion of their environment is tampored with. Such a curtailment of the essential is not art, but a trick which exploits mutilation in order to assest a false to reality."[4]

Rabindranath, however, very well realized that the contemporary environment, with which the poet deals, has absorbed science; that science in its innumerable aspects has become part of our daily life; that it is responsible for vast economic, social, and political changes, that it is at the basis of contemporary philosophy; and that it has brought about new attitudes and beliefs in the individual. Artists and poets before him were aware of this gradual progrsss of science. They tried, with more or less success, to incorporate scientific phenomena into their art as part and parcel of the reality which they were out to depiet. There are many such passages in which the images are taken from his own contemporary scientific world in Shakespeare, which must have seemed to the Elizabethans appallingly "modern." There is that famous prophetic passage by Wordsworth, written in 1800, which could have been written by Rabindranath himself :

> "If the time should ever come when what is now called Science, thus familiarised to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will become the being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of men."[5]

The time has undoubtedly come now; but very few poets only are capable of making the proper use of science in their work. Unless it become an integral part of the reality which is behind the veil of things, its presence in poetry will be artificial and

essentially irrelevant. To force science into poetry, as some modern poets do, expresses a dissociation of sensibility which is unfortunately representative of our time. But Rabindranath, as Wordsworth before him and as some of the most gifted contemporary poets, could very well visualise a science that had become "flesh and blood" and had been integrated into the life of men :

> "Machines and factories are . . . . finding an increasing place in literature, for in our imagination they are coming to transcend their particular uses, wherefore it has become possible for their harmoniously-built wholes to appear real to us, as manifestations of power apart from their various components. It is possible for men to enter into emotional relations with them, like the love of the captain of a steamship for the vessel under his command."[6]

Whenever science is introduced into poetry as something to which the reader can respond both intellectually and emotionally, the poet's experiences will no longer remain aloof and divorced from the reality of the people around him. He will have to give up his ivory-tower and come down to those who serve the factories and machines; the instruments and agents of science. And Rabindranath again and again affirms his conviction that poetry, all greet poetry today, must, cease to be merely "aristocratic" in experiences and emotions depicted :

> "So the poems and stories of today have already given up their pre-occupation with exalted persons, and taken to raking up the living embers from the ashes under which they lay smothered."[7]

Rabindranath here defines one of the most significant characteristics of modern poetry; it has restored its contact with the ordinary life of men which had been lost for the last 200 years.

The average and commonplace are never beautiful; whenever we become "deeply conscious" of their reality they seem to be beyond all the standards of aesthetics. Their existence is their only justification. The ordinary life of men when depicted in a

poem is neither high nor low, beautiful or ugly. It impresses us by the intensity of particular experiences which are transformed by the poet into the universal facts of life. In the chapter on modern poetry. in *Sahityer Pathe*, Rabindranath seems to regret the almost complete absence of "beauty" from contemporary poetry; once he says that the struggle for existence has become more important to human beings than existence itself; later on he affirms that people have no more time for beauty, for those leisurely luxuries of life which make life worth living. The subject-matter of a modern poem not convince the reader by "beauty" and outward refinement, but by the very intensity of the experience depicted by the poet. The modern poet, according to Rabindranath, has not a personality to express, but objects and experience as they appear to him in his great isolation and detachment. And he substantiates his remarks by discussing two poems, one by Robert Bridges and another by T.S. Eliot, of which the first is still in the romantic or "aristocratic" tradition, while the second has achieved a considerable detachment, a unification of sensibility which was not given to either the romantics or the Victorians.

Rabindranath had grave misgivings in his mind as regards the detachment of the modern poet. These misgivings were not due to a conservative bent of mind, but very largely to the fact those who at present parade as "modern" poets, could not offer him anything but their own frustration, their mental and emotional disintegration, their own private attitudes and beliefs. Rabindranath became increasingly aware of the tendency in contemporary Western poetry to dissect and analyse those very human emotions without which there can be no poetry at all; for such an analysis always ends in a mental vacuum for the poet out of which there is no escape. And whether we agree with Rabindranath's purely aesthetic attitude or not, we cannot help feeling that in the following quotation he speaks the truth :

> "The union of hearts, as seen by us, is abstrtcted from the primitive needs of Nature (sex-instinct) into the glory of its own finality. The psycho-analyst has introduced a further complication by asseverating that the animal sex-instinct is also a deep and potent factor in the mental life of man.

> But whatever practical utility or intellectual value this dictum of science may have it can have no place in the realm of literature and art, which is concerned with the valuation of man's feeling of delight according to his standard of the eternal . . . . The problems that have arisen with regard to the place of the ex-relation in literature cannot be solved from the scientific or moral standpoint, but from that of Aesthetics which alone can determine which of its two aspects man will adorn and raise on the pedestal of immortality."[8]

Similarly, he was always suspicious of an exhibition of force and virility in poetry; any deliberate attempt to impress the reader by the boldness and "realism" of the poet's language, his experiences or his images, was a sign of a loss of mental equilibrium, a lack of confidence in one's own capacity at integrating reality, a distored sensibility; and much of contemporary literature, he found, was of this kind :

> "Its expressions are often grimaces, like the cactus of the desert which lacks modesty in its distortions and peace in its thorns, in whose attitude an aggressive discourtesy bristles up suggesting a forced pride of poverty."[9]

The fact that contemporary poetry is often "shocking" may be distasteful to some, but it does not a priori prove anything at all. For all great poetry (except during the last 200 years in Europe) was to a more or less extent "shocking." Agamemnon's deplorable death, Dante's Inferno, or Othello's raving jealousy, are equally, if not more, shocking. There seems to exist a tacit assumption that "discourtesy" and "incivility" in the classics are never an end in themselves. Poets in all ages found reality profoundly agonising, and Rabindranath was surely not the first to revolt against it. The difference between him and most of the contemporary Western writers indeed lies in the fact that he *did* revolt, whereas the later all too frequently idulged in a defeatist acquiescence in the inevitable. In a poem written a few years before his death, he gives expression to this revolt in language which leaves nothing to the desired as regards explicitness and directness of expression :

When my mind was released
from the black cavern of oblivion
and woke up into an intolerable surprise.
it found itself at the crater of a volcanic hell-fire
that spouted forth a stifling fume of insult to Man;
it witnessed the long-drawn suicidal agony of the Time-spirit
passing through convulsions of a monstrous deformity worse than death,
On its one side a defiant savagery and the growl of homicidal drunkenness,
on the other timid powers tied to the load of their carefully guarded hoardings . . .

Whenever, Rabindranath discussed contemporary Western poetry from a historical point of view, he started with the fundamental differencc between "personal" and "impersonal" poems. He found that in the 19th century the personality of the subject, the poet himself, was all that mattered, while today it is the "personality" of the object that is cxpressed in poetry. The art of "completely seeing" reality is essentially contemporary, but Rabindranath asks again and again whether poetic creation is not by its very nature a process of selection, and whether modern poetry does not apply a wrong method in selecting frequently irrelevant "objects," that is experiences, for poetic treatment. On the ether hand, however, he says himself that the best way of looking at things is to face reality as it is, fully and objectively; and he quoted a Chinese poem (significantly enough from a translation by Ezra Pound) which proves his point. This indeed is great poetry, he says, but it is not "modern" in the usual sense of the term; for there are no hysterical and high-strung sentiments in it, no frustration no bitter contempt, and the subject-matter is common and yet of universal interest. Those who are "modern" for the sake of cheap sensationalism will disagree with Rabindranath; but those who have the courage to look behind the veil of things, beyond the reality of personal experiences, will find in Rabindranath's approach to his contemporaries an attempt at the unification of the poet's sensibility. T.S. Eliot expresses the same idea in one of his essays :

"The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a

continual extinction of personality . . . but the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest, and transmute the passions which are its material."[10]

It is indeed disputable whether the "modern" objectivity is the result of a loss of mental equilibrium, as Rabindranath maintains in *Sahityer Pathe.* In Eliot, as well as in some of the most outstanding modern poets in England and in France, the impersonal objective is due to a greater awareness of the universe around them, an awareness which indeed makes them more than one look for "reality" behind the veil of things. Experience that have been mentally assimilated and integrated cease to be mere fragments; the sensibility of the poet has been unified. No wonder, therefore, that the mateiial of modern poetry includes experiences that are "un-poetical" if judged by the standards of the 19th century. It amalgamates disparate experiences in such a way that we become "deeply conscious" of their reality. And if their intellectualism is at times obscure and complex, it is because the reality with which they had to deal was not the same as the one which a Chinese poet three hundred years ago had to face. The contemporary environment provides the poet no longer with ready-made literary formulas, with ready-made beliefs and attitudes, but rather with disconnected stimuli, fragments of experiences, among which the awarencess of frustration and chaos is the most important. Rabindranath very rightly thinks that this is "a deviation from human excellence." And we may add; so is also Agamemnon's death, Dante's Inferno, and Othello's jealousy. This is what Rabindranath says :

"Some profess to see a kind of beauty in such frenzied dance. It sometimes seems to me that the literature of Europe takes a special delight in picturing this kind of mad revel, without aim without end, devoid of peace. But we cannot look on this as the perfection of culture; it appears to us as a deviation from buman excellence."[11]

Reality has ceased to be the "playmate" of the poet of today. It has become something which has to be taken seriously by him, because it is so profoundly agonising and because behind the veil

of things he found a great emptiness, "a black cavern of oblivion," anguish and disbelief. He still expresses his own personality; but, as though afraid of his own voice in the ever-growing darkness, he expresses it through the medium of things," in terms of digested and integrated experiences. Rabindranath knew all this; he realized the possibilities of this new impersonal approach to human existence; but he was also aware of the helplessness of those modern poets who were "caught in the toils of reality": who had to escape into artificial forcefulness, into an over-emphasis on the abnormal, and into an immoderate craving for sensationalism to convince themselves of their own existence.

In this sense only can we understand Rabindranath's approach to contemporary Western poetry; he found in it all the elements which make for great poety; but he was also aware of the gradual deterioration of the poetic impulse, an undue insistence on the morbid aspects of existence, and, lastly, the chaos that comes over all literature when a civilization has outlived itself and human beings are striving for new ideals and beliefs. Whether this chaos will bring forth a new spontaneity in artistic creation and new patterns of belief, he himself could not say. His evaluation of modern poetry, scattered as it is throughout many books and articles, stands for the essential and fundamental sanity of the artist, a reminder, as it were to the modern poet that behind the present chaos and darkness there is a "reality" which surpasses all the vanity of human dreams and aspirations. And we are not far from wrong when we assume that he wanted the modern poet to become "like a child" again, playfully mastering reality and creating and illusion of things which only seem to be what thee are.

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TAGORE'S CONCEPTION OF MUSIC

RAJYESWAR MITRA

Tagore differed greatly from the *Ustads* in his conception of music. He would like to be quite brief and precise white the *Ustads* would cherish an insatiable desire of elaborating the threads of music. Tagore was altogether against this method of procrastination. His ideal was that music should be restrained and carefully balanced since an art is best when within well-drawn limit.

It is not that Tagore did not concede any improvisation; all that he wanted is to discard frequent repetition of the same work as has been the practice among the *Ustads*. This he considered paucity of imagination and indulgence of those wanting in artistic sense.

This thought brought Tagore close to the original Indian thought of music. The ancient outhorities laid down stress on the proportionate construction of music and laid down principles which fulfilled this project. We can take the example of *Alap* (presentation of pure music before rendering a song) where the executant has enough freedom of expanding a *Raga* subject to certain restrictions exercising control and restraint. Such balanced method of presentation was accepted by the singers of *Dhrupad* in the past and is still respected in certain families practising that art. In fact, a restrained performance is the product of a cultured and cultivated mind. Originally music was produced by the Brahmin Scholars who gradually left the trade. Since they had gone out of the field the art was captured by the performers and

they continued to repeat what they were taught. Unfortunately this uncomprehended art was mistaken for real by the misinformed pattrens; certain practices without sound principles have come to exist as the so called Indian music.

The discerning intellectuals who did not like certain indefinite vocal work to be termed music remained aloof. Tagore is classed with them. He looked upon music as a compact comprehensive art which would be colourful yet unconfused, charged with sincere emotions without being sentimental, curious with variegated expressions without disorganising the structure. Actuated by these ideals his compositions have been characterised by beauty, grace and dignity. These ideals have, however, been too rigid to a class of singers who, while delineating his songs, take only the outline of his tune and present it in their own way, replete with all sorts of improvisations. In many quarters Tagore's simple tune is found to be confused, subtle suggestive touches totally ignored and the appeal entirely perverted. Tagore's songs have thus been made commonplace and his art humiliated by distortion. It should be appreciated that Tagore did not compose in the conventional *Hindusthani* style and leave a second edition of the commonplace *Hindustani* songs. Although he had a very fine grasp of the application of the *Hindusthani* songs which he introduced in his own songs sporadically, yet his own conception of beauty and technique has always been alive and wonderfully manifest in his creations. If this is forgotten then Tagore stands forgotten in his own songs.

All throught his life Tagore worked for precision. He would never allow any lapse in his carefully prepared framework. He is extremely suggestive in his shortest lyrics and those suggestive touches indicated in his tune are enough to do justice to his songs. In this style he was profoundly influenced by the erstwhile composers who introduced a new art of suggestive songs known as *Tappa*. The object of these songs was to express a sentiment in its most poignant form by short and subtle touches avoiding verbosity. Tagore denied even the little elaboration permitted by the old masters as he considered his songs still more delicate than those peceding. Another remarkable influence of the traditional music on Tagore is *Dhrupad*. Hindusthani songs of this class attracted him for their grace, dignity and compactness of form. Here too he accepted the principles only and would not leave

any scope for vocal elaborations as are common in traditional style. He composed several songs on the model of *Dhrupad*, retaining his own simple characteristics.

Tagore's dislike for improvisations do not, however, be little his devotion to classical music. His regard for classical compositions rather tend to create an impression that he was conservative in outlook; and, as a composer, whether he is a classicist or a romantic is a matter of dispute. Copious illustrations can be cited from Tagore to show his enormous liking for the classical patterns and instances are abundant where he actually grafted the olden arts in his new compositions. Nevertheless he found out a unique style of his own absorbing various classical qualities, retaining continuity with the convention. Tagore's assessment of himself was that he was essentially a romantic composer and he was not reticent about his views.

The immensity of his personality in his music has made it utmost self-centered. This aspect of his music has been vehemently criticised but it is more or less common with all the romantic composers. They adapt styles very much their own to impress their originalities which carry with them universal appeals despite striking individualistic characters. Tagore wanted to make his listeners perceive what he perceived by applying musical phrases singularly his own and shapped his music in his fashion avoiding the beaten tracks but retaining the best in the conventional forms. Sometimes his lyrics are free or even prosaic, yet the conventional metric patterns have been used as and when required with wonderful effect.

Tagore is great for his thought which comprehended not only all time honoured practices but also those having future possibilities, and he had capacity for dovetailing them into a rare production every inch of which bears the stamp of masterly carefulness.

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NOTES ON THE GITANJALI

PHILIP ERNEST RICHARDS*

The extraordinary welcome which the English translation of the *Gitanjali* has met with is a proof that Bengal can write good poetry and that England can enjoy it. Statesmen, clergymen, and men of letters have spoken in praise of the *Gitanjali*, every critical journal has extolled it; and the booksellers have found customers asking for it in large numbers. I myself have bought a copy and broken a vow I made to abstain from extravagance.

Why this success ? The *Gitanjali* shows the mind of a self-conscious poet artist; it is full of pictures of Bengal; it is probably the most intimate and faithful revelation of his own thoughts which a native of the Far East has ever afforded to natives of the West. All these are reasons why the *Gitanjali* should have "succeeded" but they are not the real reasons of its success. The real reason is the personality of the poet, half revealed and half hidden--the author's presence felt in the charm of the style. Rabindranath Tagore was English better than I and the majority of Englishmen can use it—better than anybody except the few literary masters. It is the style which constitutes the charm of the book—a style of extraordinary quietness, simplicity, beauty and dignity; and the secret of style is—well, those who are in possession of this secret have never yet communicated it.

The poet knows that the charm is inexplicable—even he

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cannot explain it. Listeners come to him and say "Tell us all your meanings." He knows not how to answer them and contents himself with replaying "Ah, who knows what they mean ?". His visitors smile, he says, and go away with utter scorn. But the poet has forgotten me. I have been asking his songs what they mean ever since I read them, and being unable to find the reply I have gone away not with a smile, not in utter scorn, but with a sense once more that I have been trying to solve the riddle of the world. Since the poet himself cannot explain his own meaning, the attempt to expound him will be abandoned by the best critics.

I remark in passing, that the superiority of poetry to philosophy is discernable in this circumstance—that philosophy is explicable (at least the philosophers profess to understand it), but poetry is inexplicible. After you have expounded a system of philosophy there is usually nothing left; but after you have expounded a poem the poem is still left, neither the worse nor the better for your exposition. Philosophy is limited but poetry is unfathomable. Philosophy seeks to explain, but poetry is that which has to be explained. The philosopher is a commentator, but the poet is a creator —and the critic is nothing :

Hear, then, what nothing has to say. The poet has scattered some meanings and self-explanations about his pages, and these being limited things can come within the comprehension of the infinitely little. One of the characteristics of our poet is his worship of experience, and the high value he attaches to experience of every kind. In the deepest silence of night the stars smile and whisper among themselves : "Vain is this seeking—unbroken perfection is over all." Not only the stars think so; the poet thinks so. "Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song. . . . the joy that sets the twin brother, life and death, dancing over the wide world. . . .the joy that sits still with its tears on the open red lotus of pain." There is no doubt about the sincerity of this utterance : the poet has looked upon both death and pain with joy; and when he is dying himself, he would wish that his last song should be full of all the ecstasies within human experience—both of rapture and torture. He has immense powers of acceptance—the power which belongs to the pantheist : "When I go from hence let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable. . . . In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play; and here have I caught sight of him that his formless." This is flat pantheism and

and shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil—what harm if thy clothes become tattered and stained ? Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow." This song, by the way, exhibits Tagore in the character of a revolutionary overthrowing cults and castes and conventional goodness. It seems to me by far the most powerful song in the *Gitanjali.* The holy mantle which protects us from experience and sympathy and co-operation is not a desirable possession. When we come into his world we are strangers to it, and when he leave this world the unknown will appear known to us. Death is like the mother's changing the child from one breast to the other. "And now I am eager to die into the deathless."

Why is it that Tagore's words about life and death are invested with an authority that is missing from the months of the official representatives of morality and religion ? Because what Tagore has learnt, he has learnt from song. "It was my songs that taught me all the lessons I ever learnt. . . .they guided me all the day long to the mysteries of the country of pleasure and pain, and at last, to what palace gate have they brought me in the evening at the end of my journey ?"

These are some of the things Tagore has told us about himself and about the universe. These things, however, are not the whole. The best part of the poet's mind is still out of sight in the sense of being beyond explanation. Beauty is the greatest thing in the world, and these pages are full of beauty. No man ever invented beauty, nor stole it, nor came into its possession in any other manner than honestly. When there is a creator of beauty there is a participator in the power that creates the world : and there all men are compelled to be in awe.

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RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S PLAYS

LOVIS GILLET

[M. Louis Gillet is a well-known French critic, and it is interesting and instructive for the many Indian admirers of our national poet to know what the western critics think of his plays and poems. M. Gillet's appreciation of Tagore's plays is thoughtful and thought-provoking, and the fact that he is not a blind admirer of the poet adds zest to his eulogy. This French critic is unable to understand and appreciate the wonderful blending of ethics and aesthetics in Tagore's art which gives a poetic character to his philosophy and a philosophic character to his poetry, because in Europe, and especially in France, these are generally divorced. This fact, besides the Germanophobia, which has become unfortunately a national mental disease in France, has blinded M. Gillet's critical acumen and made him unable to appreciate the real significance of Tagore's world mission. But in spite of this defect of the article, it has a value to Indian lovers of Tagore's poetry.—*Mukund M. Desai.*]

In the midst of his travels in the course of his long apostolate in Europe and America, the Bengalee poet, Rabindranath Tagore, did not cease to display the marks of his multiple activity. Within two years he published two volumes of addresses, poems, a new novel, and a fine selection of the letters of youth (Glimpses of Bengal). His far-off appearance and the long white role with his dreamy face take hold of the imagination. He is a wandering symbol of the awakening in Asia. We are promised on our stage couple of his plays. The occasion seemed to me to be suitable to

re-read his plays. In France the poet and the story-teller are well-known through good translations; but the dramatist, on the contrary, is still unedited in French. However, it is in this form that a poet has a chance of making himself approachable and it is through this that one can comprehend most easily Tagore's genius and the history of his ideas.

One cannot expect here a history of the Indian-theatre, for which one can consult the classical work of M. Sylvain Devi. This theatre threw a bright lustre upon the fifth and the sixth centuries, the period which is considered to be the period of Kalidasa, the famous author of Sakuntala. Its brilliant revival was witnessed towards the middle of the last century when India, shaking off her long lithargy, felt the first glimpses if her national aspirations. Whereve there are oppressed races and tongues, the stage is the nursery of nationalism. It is a ventage-point whence it is possible to rouse the national conscience. The first form which the new dramatic school took in India was that of the problem-play. The play called Nil-darpana by Dina-Bandhu Mitra had in Bangal a success which reminds one of the success of Uncle Tom's Cabin. It is the picture of the cultivators' village destroyed by the establishment of an English factory. The conditions of women, the problems of widows and polygamy offered a vast field for social satire. We must bear in mind that in the country-sides the old stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata, the love legends of Krishna and Radha are still as popular as they were ten centuries ago, and are subjects of as vivid representations as the Oberammergan Passion Play.

Tagore's plays are not an isolated fact. When he made his *debut* as a writer, towards 1880, in Bengal there was a dramatic activatiy in which he tried to take part. In fact he made one or two experiments which have not been preserved; we learn from his Reminiscenes that they were comedies interspersed with songs or rather a succession of cantatas, a kind of oratorios. The tragic muse was long hampered by its rival and it was compelled to await its turn.

Therefore, Tagore's plays are outcome of the poet's vacant moments, but the poet is never very far off and appears every now and then in the work of the dramatist. Moreover this confusion of the drama and the lyric is little incommoding on the Indian Stage. It seems even quite natural there and in this way

Rabindrath's plays take a national shape. Besides the social and the problem plays, he resumes his connection with the classical tradition, that is to say, with this superior kind of *rupakas* where poetry constitutes the chief element of the drama. The particular conventions of the type of plays, the oriental formalism, the spirit of good breeding and refinement which form the etiquette of the old Indian societies, made it a rule for the poet to avoid all kinds of violent conflicts, to eschew the paintings of brutal passions. tragical catastrophes and shedding of blood. As in all places where the poet wrote only for the court, there was in reality only one species of poetry—the pastoral; the people figure to themselves a theatre condemned to merely *Amintes* and *Pastor fido*. Forests in which princes lose their way in the pursuit of a deer, beautiful maidens tending the flowers of the hermitage, the spectacle of a growing love, the lamentations of the innocent girl, seduced and deserted, the vengeance of an irritable magician who throws a baleful spell upon the lovers, the young bride's journey who loses her ring which is to help her to be recognised, such are the incidents which fill the seven acts of the long idyll of Sakuntala. The entire interest lies in a succession of images which constantly renew the impression of elegance and plastic beauty. Who does not remember the verses in which Goether expressed this sensuous magic ?

Thus, we see that Tagore did not introduce new elements on the Indian stage. I suspect that he fell under the influence of M. Maeterlnek's famous short plays. But it is quite clear that his first ambition was to revive the classical drama. Every now and then in his writings we come across the name of Kalidasa. The East is unchanging, through a period of twelve or fifteen centuries the same theatre is kept up.

One must not, therefore, fancy plays constructed on European models, with that scaffolding of intrigue and articulation which form an essential part of our dramatic art. The action preserves with them more than with us the dreamy nature. Our realism is unknown to them. Generally in the Eastern art there is an aesthetic of convention, dignity and restraint like the partly frozen smile which is spread over the limbs and face of the imperturbable images of Buddha. So likewise is the character of their dances which consists in low oscillations of the body and delicate bending of the wrists and hands, so different from the bustle and capers of

our dancing. Their art is static, monumental. Thirty years ago M. Sylvain Levi, describing the Indian actors, wrote : "Their acting lies more in declamation than in action : at the most pathetic moment they remain unmoved." Buddha's mother, leaning against a tree in a graceful attitude and giving birth to her son, issuing from her right side like a flower budding on a flexible stem, this method of expressing things by anasthetizing them and producing by a narcotic effect an impression of serenity is an illustration which well depicts the type illusion sought by the Indian drama.

The scenery appears to be reduced to the minimum. Scenic indications are even very rare in Tagore's plays. In India there are in some big towns regular theatres where scenical mechanisms are used. But evidently Tagor's plays are written, like those of former times, to be acted in the open air, in the court-yards overlooked by one or two stories of galleries such as are still presented by certain Spanish, *posadas*. In similar court-yards Shakespeare and Calderon were acted. The conditions are thus, almost similar to those that existed in Europe four or five centuries ago. Female parts are played by boys. The costumes are magnificent but the decoration and furniture are reduced to simplest expression. Poetry alone undertakes painting.

The gold of the evening is melting in the heart of the blue sea. The forest, on the hill-side, is drinking the last cup of day-light. On the felt, the village huts are seen through the trees with their evening lamps lighted, like a veiled mother watching by her sleeping children. Nature, thou art my slave. Thou hast spread thy many-coloured carpet in the great hall where [sit alone like a king and watch thee dance with thy starry necklace twinkling on thy breast."

It follows naturally that there cannot be in such a drama any question of adventures or common characters. Nothing is more foreign to the European mind than the caste-system prevalent in India from time immemorial. Tagore, so broad-minded in certain aspects, seems to look upon it as a necessity which perhaps has had its day but whose services in the past must be acknowledged. Both as a story-teller and as a novelist he does not hesitate to give the humblest pictures of life. But as a dramatic or at least as a poet he is decidedly an aristocrat. This humanitarian apostle hardly puts upon the stage any one but gods, heroes and kings.

There are some things more strong than social ideas, for example, the aesthetic law. The dignity of language is at stake. One cannot make the merchant speak the language of gods. Thus, this preacher and prophet with his sonorous name and magian beauty pointing to a star comes to us from the land of legends from that Asiatic steppe, which like a nurse on her knees lulled humanity to sleep by telling stories that always commenced with the eternal words—"Once upon a time there was a king and queen."

The first of these plays, Chitra, written by the author when he was about thirty, is also the one which resembles most closely the Indian classical models. The subject is taken from the Mahabharata. It is a poem full of glowing thoughts on women and love. The author who was then recently married turns his happiness into objects of the dreams. Chitra is bred by her father, who had no son, as a boy and is instructed in arms, the chase and the heroic life. One day in the forest she meets a man sleeping on a bed of dried leaves. He leaps up suddenly like a sudden tongue of fire from a heap of ashes." Then for the first time in her life she felt herself a woman. She prays the God of Love (Madana) to grant her the boon and beauty. "Give me but one brief day of perfect beauty and I will answer for the days that follow." The God of Love grants her a year. She secures the love of Arjuna. But is it her real self that Arjuna is folding in his arms or rather is he only fond of a foreign case ? Will he never recognise her real self whose love was awakened by his kisses and who feels elevated to be mistaken for one who is more beautiful ? It is difficult to express more acutely a problem of the casuistry and metaphysics of love; that melancholia at the commencement of love when passion throws the lovers into each other's arms, insatiable to be known and to be united and the powerlessness of the bodies to embrace the souls. What is love based upon this illusion of pleasure or rather this great deceit of nature which envelops for the moment all persons in a charm fascinating and impersonal like the spring ? How can one frustrate this universal share and in that feast which nature provided for herself and her ends in order to be able to say. "It is I and it is myself who am loved and not a phantom created by passion" ? Such is the subject of Chitra's lamentations. At last she resumes her arms and man's costumes and reappears before Arjuna.

"My lord, has the cup been drained to the last drop ? Have

you exhausted love's fragrance ? The flower season is over. The gift that I proudly bring you is the heart of a woman. What you cherished was only a disguise. By the boon of gods I obtained for a year the most radiant form that a mortal ever worse, and wearied my hero's heart with the burden of that deceit. I am Chitra, the daughter of the kingly house of Manipur. If you deign to keep me by your side in path of danger and daring, if you allow me to share the great duties of your life, then you will know my true-self. If your babe, whom I am nourishing in my womb, be born a son, I shall myself teach him to be a second Arjuna, and send him to you when the time comes, and then at last you will truly know me. Today I can only offer you Chitra, the daughter of a king."

The significance of this ascetic play is mainly a lesson on the seriousness of life and human dignity. It is the idea of the action which succeeds the honeymoon. It is an appeal, often repeated by the poet, for the collaboration of women in whom he always sees the great spiritual power, the genius or, as he prefers to name it, the Sakti of the motherland. And I doubt not that Chitra, the tender-hearted huntress who entreated the gods to make her beautiful so that she may please and who, however, suffers for being only an object of pleasure, is one of the purest heroines of a theatre which created Sakuntala, that Griselda on the banks of the Ganges, and Vasantasena, the first and most touching of loving courtesans.

I am not aware of the order in which the next two or three plays were written. The poet's biographies do not throw any light on this matter. India has never attached importance to chronology. She has preserved only her dreams in the course of her long life. I, however, have reason to think that two chief plays, the most original and famous, belong to the period of his maturity that which followed the period of the effusion of the Lyrical Offerings and preceded the meditations of Sadhana. They bear the gray line of maturity. In them the author seems to be absorbed by the thought of destiny.

We know that at one time in his life the village post-office was placed in a part of the building belonging to his farm where he was staying. He saw its flag from his window, almost every day he used to speak with the post-master, and here he wrote the story of the Post-Master. It is the story of a home-sick English officer who does not understand the tender-hearted nature of his Hindu servant girl and this has no connection whatsoever with the

play of the same name. But what a fitting subject of dreams is the post-office for this aerial creature who surrenders himself to fancies and who spreads the silent news quicker than birds! Everything that serves among men as a link and a sign, the bell, the light-house, the message is a theme for poetry. Who does not recall the hourse spent in childhood in guessing the sound of bell or in wondering how the words travel upon the long telegraph wires? How their mysterious murmurings affected the attentive silence of the country-side. More was not needed to supply the motive for Tagore's charming plays. It is also a child's dream. Tagore is the tenderest of the poets of childhood. And perhaps he has written nothing more simple and human than this short play, The Post-Office.

The boy Amal is very ill. One does not know what is wrong with him. His health makes his foster father, Madhav, very anxious. The physician prescribes the diet and rest. He quotes the scriptures and shakes his head very gravely. Above all the patient must not be fatigued or excited. There must be no draughts in the room. The child should be confined to his room and everything should be carefully closed, let the patient neither get warm nor feel cold. And the little prisoner, left alone throughout the day while Madhav is at work, dreams.

No, He is not alone. He places himself before the window and looks at the passers-by. This window is all that he knows of the world and it is enough for him to imagine the vast universe. He calls the passers-by and makes them tell stories and the whole of life as a child conceives it, marches past the narrow framework of the window. There is the Curd-seller, the Watchman, the fussy Headman, the kindhearted tramp who knows so many nice stories and Sudha, the little flower-girl who hurries off promising him flowers. And every time the child imagines how fine must be that life of which he is so ignorant, how jolly it would be to gather flowers with Sudha, to go with the Dairyman to milk the cows on the hills, and to see the world across the brow of the mountain. This caged child fashioning the romance of life out of the odds and ends of his sensations, desires and dreams, recalls the sublime platonic allegory of the cave. But one thing especially makes him a dreamer, it is the fine post-office building with its king's flag. Does the king write sometimes? Would he write to be? How am I to know if there is a letter for me? Is

there a finer post than that of the king's post-man ? While talking with his friend the *tramp*, the sick boy learns these fine things. From that time the boy waits and waits feverishly for the king's letter. His condition becomes worse and he is confined to his bed. The Doctor is afraid that he has caught cold on account of those fearful draughts and he gets the window closed. But the dying boy thinks only of his letters. And at last the expected messenger. He announces that the King sends his own State Physician and he will come himself. The State Physician comes and orders the window to be opened and the lamp to be blown out so that the star-light may stream in, and he gently takes the boy's hand and putting his finger on the lip says, "Hush, he sleeps."

It is very difficult to express the exact meaning of this short poem. Perhaps we must not seek too exact a symbol in each character. It is less a question intellectual terms, quite clear to the understanding than an emotional residue like the sweet sensation floating in the mind after a dream. We may guess the significance of this cure, this deliverance, this freedom which unchains the imprisoned boy. We catch a glimpse of the meaning of this message, this mysterious order which reaches the sick boy. It is the call of vocation, of mercy; it is the voice which, soon or late, make a man understand suddenly that everything is illusion excepting love and there is nothing real but the life beyond Infinite. This mysticism is no doubt very foreign to our *boulerard* theatres. The poet's genius lies in making us feel it unconsciously by means of close but familiar images like the author of the *Aueugles* and *l'Intruse*. But Tagore's short mystery play leaves the spectator with the beneficent impression of tenderness and peace.

These topics of darkness and king which are treated so magnificently at the end of The Post Office form the main theme of The King of the Dark Chamber. The motives are the same but they are reset and scored. To give the story in brief it is one of those eternal myths found in all languages, the story of Psyche. But who is this King who never shows himself to his subjects, this unnamed King whose face is known to none, who never shows himself in broad daylight to any living being, whose existence is accepted as a matter of faith and whose wife herself, Queen Sudarshana, meets him only in profound darkness ? Some deny him and others acknowledge him without his caring to come out of the mystery

and to reveal himself. An usurper poses as the king. The King is not affected and makes no attempt to comfound him, only he promises the Queen that on the night of the full-moon festival he will be in the palace garden and she must try to recognise him. The foolish woman, as it is expected, guesses wrongly and flings herself into the arms of the tinsel king. She has to go through long adventures and bitter humiliations before her mistake is proved to her. Her pride must be broken and curiosity and vexation have to be changed into simple acceptation, complete submission and self-forgetfulness must take the place of self-love, and there must be complete self-surrender to the will of the master before revelation is made. Heart is revealed to heart and love recognises love.

I am afraid, so dry a summary describes very imperfectly the charm of such a story. Analysis deprives it of its chief beauty, the fascination of a series of beautiful images, inexpressible meanings which give rise to various interpretations like the changing forms of the clouds at sunset. One hesitates between several symbols and this hesitation augments the richness of the poem. Sometimes one is tempted to find in it an individual drama, the drama of the soul seduced by appearances, destructed and led astray by things, and which can find itself only by looking deep within itself, in that deep region where truth speaks and where one hears the voice of the master within. At other times this King of the Dark Chamber, who shows himself only in darkness and silence and declines to come out to confound his blasphemers, resembles patient God who rests satisfied with appearing in the universal order and bears claimly the trespasses of his creatures. At other times besides this religious interpretation one cannot help reading another. This hidden king who is let alone and who does not show himself and who can bear to be doubted and who does not condenscend to protest against false powers and the idols of the day and even when the queen is led astray by them is quite confident that his day will come and that the rightful sovereign will come into his own, this prince mysterious and dark as the night who waits silently for the return of the faithful, is he not India's Genius, in face of her temporary masters and oppressors ? One thinks unconsciously of some of his letters of youth (Glimpses of Bengal) recently published.

"How these people despise us . . . . I seem to have by my side India, our oppressed mother living there with her

head in the dust inconsolable for her lost glory. What a grotesque misery in this meeting of *memsahibs* in their black dress with the noise of their babbling in English and their peals of laughter. What a treasure of truth for us in our hoary India of former days; what poverty and falsehood is there in the empty ceremonial of an English dinner."

This letter is dated 1893. Who knows whether in it is not to be found the germ of the play we are discussing, the contrast between the false king surrounded by his officials and flatterers and the invisible king who rules in the recess of the hearts ? At least is not this one of the interpretations which we are permitted to form from the glimpses of the vague clearness of the poem or would it diminish its value to recognise in it the old national ideal, the fight between the Maya and the truth, between light and darkness, between the deceitful fascination and the divine truth, that opposition between the world of appearances and the world of sentiments, that philosophy of penumbra of which India made a gift to Schopenhauer's though and whose magic is incorporated in the immortal nocturne of Tristan, "*O sink hernieder, Nacid der Liebe.*"

I intentionally recall to memory the marvellous melody or rather it comes to the mind of itself as a muffled accompaniment to the perusal of the poem. Perhaps it is useless to press further the interpretation of these wholly lyrical plays. They carry out their purpose if they leave floating in the mind a musical emotion. Their pre-eminence lies in their wonderful poetic elasticity. But this dreamy temperament is only one aspect of Tagore's genius.

"India is two-faced", he writes in one of his letters, "at times she is a housewife and a mother of family and at times she is a vagrant infatuated with asceticism. The first is a stay-at-home who never quits her hearth and the second has no home at all. I feel within me both thew tempers. I feel the need of journeying which impels me to see the wide world and at the same time long for well-sheltered small nook. Like the birds I need a small nest for my dwelling and the wide sky for my fight."

In fact we know that gradually in the later part of his life the lyrical poet in Tagore gives way more and more to the prophet and the apostle. He is enamoured with his mission. The great

events in Asia during the last fifteen years, the very active part she is taking in the world's affairs, must both inspire and serve writer. Since 1912 he secured world fame by Nobel Prize and his tours in Japan. America and Europe preaching his new dispensation. Tagore's influence is making more and more the voice of India heard in the affairs of the world.

To this period belongs the plays collected five or six years ago under the title of Sacrifice and Other Plays. They are entirely in a different manner from the previous plays; shorter and more rapid, more venomous and violent. The author now sees in the stage only an instrument of propaganda. He uses it to spread his doctrine just as he may deliver a discourse or an address. The style has generally a hieratic solemnity and at times a great beauty of imagery. Only these short, spirited improvisations, these dramatic sketches, these edifying *mocalities*, written hastily to defend a doctrine, entirely lose the poetic charm which forms the principal merit of the early *mysteries* of the author. The latter almost owe their whole charm to their vagueness to a quality in them of something (*je ne suis quoi*) unconscious and undefinable, to their pearly lustre, and crystallisation of dream. Much is lost in exchanging this for the glory of the demonstrations of a doctrine. Art is injured by being reduced to prove; nothing remains to it then but the value of a thesis. In these later plays. Tagore almost appears, the due proportions being observed, like Hugo of *Mangerond-ils* ? or like a sort of petty Voltaire of the *Guebres* or *L'Orphelin de la Chitra* waging war against fanaticism and superstition, declaring war against the Brahmins and turning his drama into a weapon of war.

But the Hindu stage with its absence of elasticity, its ignorant psychology and childish construction is still much less capable than ours to bear the weight of ideas and of stating the conflict in an interesting manner. Tagore's characters in his best plays are hardly living persons; in his philosophic dramas, they are no more than pore puerile abstractions, puppets entrusted with repeating a lesson. The personal life and probability are sacrificed to the development of a kind of dialectical debate which ought to end in the victory of a humanitarian formula.

Thus we see in the play called *Sanyasi* the ascetic's pride disappearing when he meets by chance a pariah girl; in *Malini*,

the crime of the high-priest. Khemankar, who does not hesitate to kill in order to maintain ancient rites and stop the progress of a new religion; in *Sacrifice*, the revolt of the Brahmin Raghupati against king Govinda who had the temerity to forbid the sacrifice of bleeding victims in his kingdom. This last play is dedicated "to those heroes who bravely stood for peace when human sacrifice was claimed for the goodess of war." It is a pacifist pleading. It was written during the war as an enconrangement to those men who did not join the colours and who refused to take part in the universal conflict.

Of course a Hindu can be excused for remaining ignorant of the causes of the war and for not sharing interests which he does not understand. We can harily blame Tagore for wishing to remain out of the conflict. Will the day ever dawn when wars by the development of human reason will become as impossible and barbarous as human sacrifices have become for the civilized man ? Will man be able to discover some day a means of establishing more peaceful relations as spiritual religious have taken the place of primitive cults and as men have ceased to believe that God can be pleased by the offering of cruel sacrifices ? Would war be a monstrous Goddess whom one has only to deny to make her disappear ? This problem, and it is the entire problem of evil is too vast to be treated within the space of two acts.

Tagore himself noticed that these kinds of problems are ill-decided on the stage. In his last play. The Cycle of Spring, he gives up preaching and he returns to dreaming, to pure poetry. For the poet's old age happens to be the signal of a new efflorescence and the return of adolescence. This allegory of Tagore growing old on the illusion of age, on renovating life, on the link of seasons in which the last days of winter are mingled with the renovating dowers, is one of the most graceful inventions; it is almost a circle, a perpetual song. The old master found in it the rapid flow of his juvenile lyricism.

This is what we learn from these poetic plays about their author's life. Tagore would be wise if he confined himself to poetry. The only mission of the poets is to create beauty and to sing of it to men. They lose their time and perhaps something besides if they presume to teach men. It is always a dangerous game to play the prophet. What can this Bengalee know what

is required by a society to which he does not belong ? How is one to believe that he alone possesses the world of truth ? For a short time he was the object of a violent infatuation. Few months ago he was received in Germany as a kind of Massiah. On all bookstalls the translations of his books were displayed for sale and his portrait greeted the visitor at *L' Ecole de Sagesse*, in that wonderful religious sanctum with confusedly Buddhistic tendencies directed by Count Keyserling, at Darmstadt. It is quite easy to perceive in this the phenomenon of discouragement. Repulsed on the West, the German mind turned once more to the East'— Russia, Asia. She inhaled with delight this thought of the vanquished. What can be the result of the dreams of the vanquished ? One cannot disregard the spite of a powerful nation which fallen from its power cherishes with a symbre pride the universal catastrophe and seeks to drag the world into the abyss. One cannot see without apprehension the formation of this coalition of bitterness and the development of this mass of nihilism interested in the fall of Europe.

But we know too well what Europe stands for to surrender ourselves to thoughts of despair on her account. We will not give up our claims as victors. We neither feel hatred nor contempt for Asia. We know what the world owes to her; but we have nothing to blush for the dignity and duties which devolve upon as by destiny. Tagore with his feminine and seducing genius received from the Gods the charming gift of beauty. Why should we take this charmer seriously as a philosopher ? There are times when the poet must be crowned with the laurel and then exiled from the state it is when they attempt to enfeeble the minds by trying to prevail upon them to abdicate.

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TAGORE'S POETIC VISION

UMASHANKAR JOSHI

Mahatma Gandhi said of Tagore that he had raised India several scores of steps upwards and added that he had thought and thought about Tagore and come to the conclusion that the most outstanding thing about him was his personality. Tagore was indeed one of the architects of modern India and even in the galaxy of the great sons and daughters of renascent India, he shone out as a man apart because of his abundant gifts and all-embracing humanism. Tagore winning the Nobel prize for poetry put India on the cultural map of the world For years Tagore was India's unofficial ambassador to the world at large. Over and above putting self-respect into the hearts of his countrymen, he taught them to keep the window open on the wide world and showed by personal example that to be a true Indian was also to be a true world-citizen.

When we look back to Tagore's times we find that he was one of the first world-citizens ever. His literary work was suffused with such peace and quiet piety—'poetic piety' like that of Dante as Ezra Pound observed—that his contemporaries all over the world found much solace and healing power in it, and Tagore was looked up to as an Oriental sage, a Seer, a Prophet.

A great patriot, a Seer, an educationist, a non-conformist reformer and an internationalist, Tagore was essentially a literary man. He was a composer of music and in the evening

of his life took to painting also. His work on and for the stage was equally outstanding. It is, however, through the word that his innermost self has manifested itself in all its beauty and truth.

He has written poems, songs, stories, novels, plays, diaries, letters, travelogues, autobiography, personal essays, textbooks for children, learned articles on grammar; prosody, history and science, on social and political problems, on philosophy and religion.

We find that the life around him flows into him and is transformed into art. His life is a continuous essay in experiencing and turning that experience into things of beauty.

During the Shileida period he wrote *Glimpses of Bengal* and short stories based on an intimate contact with rural Bengal, and at the same time his stay on the Padma yielded a rich harvest of songs. The young zemindar. 'Babu Mahashaya' would advice Madhu Biswas what crops to grow. But during this same period he rescued and revived back to life Triveni, a boy whom his erstwhile master had abandoned thinking he was dying of cholera. Indeed the personality of Tagore was at work on several fronts simultaneously and even in literary creation the same experience yielded a variety of artistic representations. And yet there is hardly any repetition. It appears that the various forms he chose perfectly suited his different artistic predilections. The short stories and the novels were steeped in realism. Who knew the sad plight of the Bengali woman as intimately as Tagore, as also her innate strength ? His plays gave him an opportunity for providing the inmates of his Ashram with a feast of song and pageant. They also embodied symbols which were after his heart. His essays were meditations on various problems, sometimes mundane, but quite often preferably philosophical. But it is poetry in which the word appeared as the distillation of Tagore's whole personality. He has written about a thousand poems and twice as many songs and these constitute his principal claim to immortality.

It is in Tagore's poetry that we find all that is best in the Indian tradition summed up—the spiritual quest of the Upanishad, the preoccupation with beauty as exemplified in

Kalidasa's works, the craving for communion with the supersensuous expressed in sensuous images by the Vaishnava poets, the carefree laconic intimacy of the Bauls of Bengal, the grand opulence of the Mughal Court, and the open-air manner of the folk song mirroring the life of the common man. It is a case of mustering a whole civilization in one's own person and recapturing its significance in terms of beauty.

In India Valmiki and Vyas before him had in the hoary past summed up whole epochs, and underlined the message those epochs held out. Kalidasa took all the splendour of India, material as well as spiritual, in his ken and passed it on to the coming generations in immortal speech. Tagore in our time experienced in his person all the essential Indian heritage and made it articulate.

I am reminded of Rilke's words on Michelangelo—

That was the man who always reappears
when any age, to mark its closing years,
strives yet once more to recapitulate.
There's one who still can heave its total weight
and hurl it into his abysmal breast.

Besides epitomizing the soul of India in his poetry Tagore ushered it into the age of one-worldness. This is very tellingly accomplished in the novel *Gora.* Gora was the protagonist of all that was best in the Indian religious tradition. All of a sudden he discovers that he was a European. The question posed by Tagore in this novel is : Has Indian nothing to offer now to Gora, an outcast ? And he has already supplied the answers through the characters of Anandmayi and Pareshbabu. Both of them had been outcasts long before, and unlike Gora, by choice. They prefered to be outcasts, the former from traditional Hindu society the latter from the institutionalised Brahma Samaj, because of their supreme realisation that true religion is rooted in love and personal integrity. To me it has always seemed that Tagore suggests through these two characters and the special predicament in which he has put Gora, that the true India transcends Indianness.

Tagore is the poet of the *Vishva Manava,* not merely, the

universal man but the man-in-the-universe, or shall we call him the All-Man, the whole man, for he alone who partakes of wholeness becomes whole. Of man Tagore was never tired of singing. His '*Farewell to Heaven*' is an eloquent homage to life on this earth. His Valmiki aspires to realise godhood in man through the rhythm of his song and the creative vision of his poetic imagination.

Tagore did imbibe the Western spirit of humanism. He respected science as a part of the grand quest of man for knowledge, and himself wrote a handbook. *Vishva-parichaya*, an introduction to the universe. But in the wake of science came the machine, and Tagore brooded anxiously over the problem of man-machine relationship.

It would be a mistake to equate Tagore's love of man with European Renaissance humanism, which no doubt influenced him as just mentioned above. Western humanism is man-intoxicated; it has put man at the centre of the scheme of things. Tagore's humanism is just not man struggling against and conquering nature, man pitted against an unkind universe, or man entrapped in a cruel destiny. Over and over again Tagore hints at a harmony between man and man, man and nature, man and the Universal Spirit. The motto be selected for his University is; *Yatra Vishvam bhavati ekanidam*—where the universe has become a single nest. The free and unfettered expression of personality, i.e., selfless creativity, is the key to attaining to All-Manhood. This is what finds a poignant utterance in his excellent allegorical play *Muktadhara* (*The Free Current*) and what made him start and run his educational experiments.

Tagore with his English *Gitanjali* made his first great impact upon the modern civilization, and if the Western world was deeply moved for a while by his voice, it was perhaps due to the calm and repose at the core of his work which concerned itself neither with the Eastern nor with the Western man but with the man-in-the-universe, the whole man.

Even when the generation which has directly come under the charm of his unique personality passes away, this aspect of his personality—and it is of the essence of his personality—will ever be revoked in the minds of men as they come in contact with his work.

Tagore will live by his writings—most by his poetry.

As an artist Tagore has always experimented with metres, diction, form. Sometimes the mood which has occupied his creative mind is over-worked but he has always a way of out-growing it. In all the variety of moods the same central vision is manifest and so is his abounding love of nature. After Kalidasa hardly any Indian poet has delineated the beauty of nature in such concrete detail. Tagore's works are incomparably rich in pictures of the infinite play of light and shade under the Indian sky—those of the ceaseless cycle of seasons. The immutability of India's mountains and vast plains has passed into his poems.

Much as I cherish his songs I would not lay great store upon them. Few songs survive the first line, if only because the first line is *une ligne donee*—the one line given by Providence. No wonder the best songs of Heine, Shelley and Tagore are usually short ones.

Great poetry concerns itself with patiently carving out shapes from material that offers resistence. Tagore's is a lyrical genius, but for his major work one has to turn to his ores, pieces like those in *Balaka* and the dialogue-poems. It is in these poems that he has got rid of verbiage and his gift of magnificent rhetoric is pressed into serving art. In Tagore's lyrical pieces there is often to be found a cloying sweetness, sometimes a sort of saccharine sweetness as that of (and no doubt under the influence of) Jayadeva. But Tagore saw its limitations as his easy '*Kekarava*' testifies, and he soon outgrew it. However, even a near-perfect piece ilke *Urvashi* has '*vilola-hillola*' thrown into it. But for some slight superfluity, it is a masterpiece of rhythmic balance matching the cosmic vision of the life-spirit in eternal dance.

> Thou hast placed thy ruddy lotus-feet
> Extremely light on the Lotus of the full-bloomed
> Desire of the Universe !

This is lyricism touching epic sublimity.

The dialogue-poems are the farthest limit of objective portraiture lyricism can reach. Who else but Tagore could have dared to treat the *Sati* episode ? These pieces reveal Tagore at his very best. They point to the heart's vision of *Dharma*. The characters are presented in the hour of crisis and as they painfully

but triumphantly pass through they short hour of trial, the whole story of their life is unfolded in retrospect. The poet shows how the truth of life is grasped not by intellect but by the power of feeling, during a moment of intense living. And the truth is, as Amabai's father describes it, "the abiding *Dharma* as visualised by the heart." Gandhari says that this "*Dharma* is an end in itself."

These dialogue-poems embody in a more concrete, more robust form what was suggested by his devotional poetry of *Gitanjali*, *Naivedya*, etc. They embody Tagore's vision of man struggling, through tremendous sacrifice or even through death, to come to terms with and establish complete harmony with—the Eternal law (*Nitya Dharma*). This is the poet's central vision of man evolving into an All-Man, *Vishva Manava*.

A mention should be made of Tagore's last poems. They at once strike as start to the point of being maked. The words in *Gitanjali*—'My song has put off all her adornments, she has no pride of dress and decoration',—would be literally true of these last poems.

May be all art, however great, partakes of the nature of cant, a kind of falsehood. Eight days before his death, he addresses the Deceitful One (*Chhalana-mayi*) : "He, who can suffer effortlessly the deceit, receives the abiding right to peace at, Thy hands." The poet is ready to shuffle off the artistic coil, following his Chitrangada who said to Love : "This borrowed beauty, this falsehood that enwraps, me, will slip from me, as the petals fall from an overblown flower."

Two days earlier, this sojourner of our planet had slaked his thirst for knowledge at the fountain-head of eternal silence :

The first day's sun
Had asked
At the new manifestation of being . . .
Who art thau
There was no answer.
Year after year went by,
The last sun of the day
The last question uttered
On the western sea-shore

In the hushed evening . . .
Who art thou ?
He got no answer.

Rabindranath's vision of the whole man puts him by the side of the great seers, the teachers of mankind. In sheer artistry he is second to none. The poems in which there is a happy fusion of the twin gifts are sufficient to rank him with the great poets of mankind. One is reminded of Goethe, when one thinks of Tagore. The works of each of them bear the stamp of a world-mind. Both were 'not afraid to live' and both embraced their whole time. Both were emancipated souls free from fear and hatred. Tagore was every inch an Indian, as Goethe was a German, and at the same time a world-poet. Poets like Tagore will be more and more appreciated as man comes into his own.

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RABINDRANATH AS MAN AND POET

CHUNILAL MUKERJI

I believe you expect me to say something about Rabindranath as a poet. But this is a subject which I, of all people present here, am least competent to do justice to. Many of you are better acquainted with Rabindra-literature than I am, and possess also a better hiterary judgment. So it is with utmost diffidence that I now proceed to deal with Rabindranath as poet. Literature is not my subject; I study it only by way of recreation. So you, who are more learned than I am, will please judge me charitably.

A day or two after Rabindranath's death, the following thought came to me which I put down on a piece of paper. I wrote :

> "If I were asked to say what makes the merit of Rabindranath's songs and poems in one simple word, I should immediately answer 'their freedom.' This freedom, which I find in Rabindranath, always accompanies true genius. It exists abundantly in the plays of Shakespeare. There is no force on earth which fetters Shakespeare's mind. No experience comes to him amiss. He is fully at home with all things, and travels everywhere, unchecked and unafraid. Rabindranath's songs range over a wide area. The manifold experiences, which compose human life as a whole, and an exquisite expression in Tagore. I wonder if any other poet of the world has so magnificently shared our joys and

sorrows, our elations and depressions. Rabindranath is great, since he is a co-sharer with us of the diversities of human lot. And he is a co-sharer, because he has a marvellously free mind. Such freedom is found in the Greek poets also. The Greek genius is a most astonishing thing, and it is partially reflected in Greek literature. The reason why the renaissance was greeted with such exuberant enthusiasm was, that it brought freedom to the European intellect. The European intellect, which had lain long under the incubus of hard religious dogmatism, rose into fresh vigor when the Renaissance made its appearance like a glorious burst of light. An inordinate passion for dogmatic theology had invaded almost every sphere of European life, and it was the study of Greek and Latin literatures which effected the emancipation. This revival of classical learning is known in history as the Renaissance. The Renaissance, though it undermined the basis of religious life in Europe, represented intellectual freedom; for the Greek poets were an eminently free race of men. If I have at all understood Rabindranath, he was Greek in temperament. His songs, so singularly unimpeachable in their execution, recall the Greek style of writing. But our Poet's sense of the vast Unknown whom we call God is something very original and very wonderful. His mysticism cannot be put under an exclusive category. It is neither Upanishadic nor Vaishnavic, neither Indian nor European. It is altogether a new thing, and the time has not arrived to appraise its merits. I had the privilege to live with this remarkable man for more than four years. I thank God for it."

I wrote this short note, as I have already told you, a day or two after the Poet's death.

The Indian Renaissance commenced with the introduction of English education. Like the European Renaissance, it, too, had its face averted from religion. The distinguished literary scholar Captain Richardson and the talented Eurasian schoolmaster DeRozio represented a subversive type of intellectualism. But, thank God, the profound wisdom of Raja Rammohun Roy and the earnest religious zeal of Dr. Duff and of the Serampore Christian missionaries saved the situation. So the introduction

of Western education ushered in an era of mental activity. The greatest Indian of modern times, Raja Rammohun Roy, appreciated, as none of his contemporaries did, the immense importance of Western culture. The Raja may be taken as the embodiment of the Indian Renaissance. Endowed with superb moral and mental qualities, Rammohun declared, in unmistakable language, the value of the individual as such. Ladies and gentlemen, some slanderers have acquired cheap notoriety by belittling the Raja's greatness. Sir, I think of all men the slanderer should be most thankful to the great men of the world. Be that as it may, the Indian Renaissance was a remarkable thing. The stream of intellectual life set going never stopped, but went forward quite vigorously. Next appeared on the scene a magnificent literary artist who, by his unequalled genius, raised our language to a noble heighth. Indeed, our debt to Bankim Chandra Chatterji is incalculable. Michael Madhusudan Dutt wrote, too, his immortal poem *Meghnadbadh Kavya.* Nor did the religious life of Bengal remain untouched. Under the leadership of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore and Brahmananda Keshub Chunder Sen the Brahmo Somaj was at the height of its power and activity. As Shakespeare cannot be understood apart from the Elizabethan period, so Rabindranath cannot be regarded as a sudden apparition in the intellectual life of Bengal. Rabindranath is the marvellous poetic embodiment of the great forces that were let loose by Western education, and hence his poetry has such a surprisingly wide range.

But here I am reminded of another moral movement which swept over the country like a mighty flood four hundred years ago. It is the wonderful Vaishnav movement. And in speaking of Rabindranath's poetry one cannot but take a glance at it. The Vaishnav movement made its way to the lowest strata of Bengali society, and produced a literature of matchless beauty. Vaishnav songs and poetry are a remarkable thing. The whole Vaishnav literature is an unparalleled romance. It can never grow old or antiquated so long as man loves woman and woman loves man. There is a mysticism in Vaishnav literature—a tender, pathetic mysticism born of Radha's ineffable longing for Krishna and Krishna's gallant surrender to beauteous Radha. But it is a human love not purged of human weakness. If Rabindranath has any rival to contend with, that rival is Vaishnav literature.

Time alone can assign the palm to the victor, whoever that be. But it would be really an extraordinary contest, It would be a contest between the natural and that which transcends the natural. For Rabindranath's songs and poetry glorify the natural by linking it up with that which lies beyond the natural. Our Poet's mysticism is quite an original thing, and its appreciation is very much dependent upon a thorough refinement of the national taste. But the human element in Vaishnav literature is so magnificently well-represented—such matchless language and incomparable tenderness—that it is not safe to pronounce on the issue of the conflict. Vaishnavism has the double advantage of being a religious cult centring, upon Krishna as God himself and also of being an unrivalled romantic story. Vaishnavism holds the field with unexampled energy. Jayadev, Vidyapati, Chandidas and a numerous race of minor poets—the race is not yet extinct—have all the same theme, and they present a united front. Writing about Dante's peculiar genius in his excellent book on the great Italian poet, R.W. Church better known as Dean Church) makes the following wise remark :

> "And his (Dante's) greatness was more than that of power. That reach and play of sympathy misistered to a noble wisdom, which used it thoughtfully and consciously for a purpose to which great poetry had never yet been applied, except in the mouth of prophets. Dante was a stern man and more than stern among his fellows. But he has left to those who never saw his face an inheritance the most precious; he has left them that which, reflecting and interpreting their minds, does so, not to amuse, not to bewilder, not to warp, not to turn them in upon themselves in distress or gloom or selfishness; not merely to hold up a mirror to nature; but to make them true and make them helpful," (*Dante* by R.W. Church, p. 188).

The sense of this quotation is, that the poet comes short as true perfections, if he only gives enjoyment. Poetry to be perfect has many sides. Judged by this standard, Rabindranath is one of the great poets of the world. It would be nothing short of a tragedy, if a mellifluous sentimentalism is allowed to stand in his way.

The most remarkable element in Tagore's poetry is its

prophetic spirit. Rabindranath is a prophet, and a prophet in Indian literature is not a quite common sight. A fair measure of it (I mean the prophetic spirit) may be found in the Sikh Gurus who were doubtless remarkable men. But I wonder if it is much in evidence in pure Sanskrit literature. One or two Upanishads, Isha and Kena, for example, may have got it to some extent, but the rest are innocent of it. It was the Hebrew race which gave birth to prophets of an outstanding character, and they have not their equals in any other part of the globe. The question arises : What is a prophet ? The standard Greek dictionary by Liddell and Scott says (for it is a Greek word), 'a prophet is the interpreter of the will of a god', *Dios prophtes esti Loxias patros.* Loxias is the inferpreter of his father Jove; poets are called *Mouson prophetai*, that is to say, interpreters of the Muses. So the prophet is one who interprets the will of God. The Hebrew Prophets had a double function. They were intensely political and also supremely universal. They denounced the aberrations of the priestly order and the wickednesses of the kings; they found fault with the rich who were grinding, the faces of the poor. The luxurious who were defrauding the indigent, "the wealthy people who made friends with and imitated the splendours and vices of foreigners' were sternly rebuked. Learned Christian divines have bestowed unstinted praise upon the Hebrew Prophets. But I shall quote the opinion of one who has repudiated Christianity, I mean H.G. Wells.

> "These prophets," says Wells, "mark the appearance of new and remarkable forces in the steady development of human society."

> Again he observes :

> "They (the prophets) carried the common man past priest and temple, past court and king and brought him face to face with the Rule of Righteousness. That is their supreme importance in the history of mankind. In the great utterances of Isaiah the prophetice voice rises to a pitch of splendid anticipation and foreshadows the whole earth united and at peace under one God. Therein the Jewish prophecies culminate."

Mr. Wells then goes on to say :

> "Nevertheless, it is the Hebrew Prophetes of the period round and about the Babylonian captivity which mark the appearance of a new power in the world, the power of individual moral appeal, of an appeal to the free conscience of mankind against the fetish sacrifices and slavish loyalties that had hitherto bridled and harnessed our race."—*A Short History of the World* by H.G. Wells, p. 105. (Collins' Edition).

Our Poet Rabindranath is a prophet, and a prophet of no mean order. The sight of evil fills him with rage. His emotion then breaks out into fierce reprobation, into terrific vituperation and sarcasm which throw their withering light upon the cherished follies of our race. *Abar Firayo More* is a poem of this nature. In another noble poem he rises to the height of intense prophetic fervour at the sight of the world's injustices and vehemently invokes God's vengeance.

> He who does wrong or suffers (that is, tolerates) wrong, may Thy wrath consume them both as hay or stubble.

Indeed, Rabindranath's prophetic character places him at once on a universal height; he then belongs not to Bengal or India alone, but to humanity at large. He abhors exclusive nationalism for which Europe is now suffering so terribly. Nationalism, which made its appearance on the dissolution of the Roman Empire and at the emergence of Luther's grossly misguided movement (though Luther had meant well) known as the Reformation, is a comparatively new thing in European history. The transition from medieval to modern age is marked by the rise of predatory nationalism —a hypertrophied, to quote Dean Inge, and perverted instinct of territorial aggrandisement. And Tagore's language betrayed utmost hatred of such organised brigandage. Rabindranath always stood aloof from current politics, but his entire spirit rose in revolt when a wrong was perpetrated. Hence, he renounced his knighthood after the Jalianwala massacre, hence, only a few weeks before his death, he vehemently exposed the British policy of exploitation in answer to an open letter by a British woman of some position. But his protest and denunciation had a dignity and earnestness to which the average politician is a stranger. He spoke like a prophet. He never hated the English people; for he had

many English friends. But if any Englishman thinks that Dr. Tagore's condemnation of Britian policy in India was prompted by hatred, he is greatly mistaken. He was a wise man, and he would not depose the English and enthrone the Nazis or the Fascists or the Bolshevists. He had no wish to be a king-maker that way. He was a wise man, and he never believed that the political problem of India could not solved by making friends with Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy or Bolshevist Russia. He knew too well that foreign domination is foreign domination after all and that to look to any new race of aliens as the likely deliverer of the Indian people is the height of stupidity. So he was never impatient of British rule as such. All that he wished to see is, that India should be governed on more righteous principles, and I don't think any true Britisher would find fault with him for it. He was too dignified to expect or ask for any political boons from the powers that be, and he did not believe that our national redemption lay only in the achievement of political victories in our tussle with the Government. So he shunned the noisier path of current politics, and devoted his energies and his resources to the development of silent, constructive work. But he always cherished sincere regard for those who were actively associated with politics and who bore many privations. But his hatred of imperialism was none the less acute for his apparent dissociation from politics. He denounced imperialism, whether it was white or yellow.

Imagine the boldness of the man that, though the Japanese Government had given him an ovation equal in grandeur to the ovation accorded to the Crown Prince of Russia a few years earlier, and that, though for mile upon mile vast crowds of Japanese men and women had left their homes to catch a glimpse of the Indian Tagore as the train went past them, yet he exposed Japanese imperialism in a series of lectures which were afterwards published in bookform. This very much antagonised the public of Japan, and Rabindranath, as far as I know, lift the shores of that country as an ordinary, obscure individual. Nor was his boldness confined to the political sphere only, where boldness invariably has its reward. Tagore took an active part in the Swadeshi movement when it was first started. But in 1907 or 1908, I think, when Bal Gangadhar Tilak visited Calcutta and when the Swadeshists were having a Hindu Puja as a visible symbol of the invisible

Swadeshi spirit, Rabindranath was invited to join it. But he wrote back to say that, as a son of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, he had nothing to do with idolatrous ceremonies. This made him very unpopular for some time. To come back to politics. So again when Japan, with a view to obtaining hegemony in Asia, invaded China more than five years ago, this valiant man expressed his warmest sympathy with the suffering Chinese nation. And it is no wonder that, when war broke out afresh in Europe after a false lull of twenty-one years, his great heart was flung into an agony of sorrow and despair. In fact, the agony of his mind exceeded the agony of his body. He himself was in the throes of death, but the thought of so much unholy waste of all that is fine and good in human nature drove him into an ecstasy of anguish, an ecstasy of bewildered rage. But the politicians of the world—that undying race of Machiavellis who, in very age and country, impose upon mankind by sinister ingenuity of phrases—would say that the poet is a soft, lackadaisical creature who must not be taken seriously But, ladies and gentlemen, it is an historical truth that all great civilisations—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Rome, Carthage, etc.,—fell by war. And by war, too, fell India, our own country. There had been almost incessant fighting in India before the deadly conflict of Kurus and Pandavas took place on the field of Kurukshetra. Rabindranath detested imperialism, since it not only exploits, but is a direct cause of all ruinous dissensions. And, as a humble follower of the Prince of Peace, I believe that Christianity and imperialism cannot abide together. Nothing so badly damages the cause of a religion as its sympathy, open or understood, with imperialistic ambitions.

I have detained you long, ladies and gentlemen, but I shall finish in a few more minutes. The poet's life is a life of joy. But Tagore's joy was somewhat of a peculiar character. It was what I may call the joy of humanity. Shakespeare excepted, there is only one poet so far as my limited knowledge of literature goes, in whom this joy is abundantly found, and he is Walt Whitman of America. Walt Whitman had a joy which is, indeed, the joy and vision of humanity. He had a vast outlook upon human life as a whole. This mysterious joy manifests itself in some of Rabindranath's shorter poems, and I am not going to take up your time with their enumeration. But I shall mention only two poems, the like of which I have not come across anywhere else,

They are *Nirjharer Sawapanbhang* and *Prabhat Utsav*. These two poems are the classic expression of Tagore's deepest craving to mingle into the life of mankind. He would not remain separate or aloof, but would be thoroughly assimilated, thoroughly fitted into the larger humanity. There two poems represent the height of poetic inspiration, and their language gleefully moves forward like a stream newly released from its rocky prison.

But, sir, I think our Poet's broad passion for the whole of the human race reaches its acme in that remarkable song *Jangana Man Adinayak Jai He Bharat Bhagya Vidhata*, God is viewed in this song as the Ruler of human destinies. Tagore's universalism is no longer merely the poet's ardent desire for concord and harmony, but it is ennobled and sanctified by a deep faith in Him who is Maker and Lord of the universe. The glorious panorama of an endless humanity is in sight. The pathways of the human race, rendered harsh by the vicissitudes of rise and fall, resound with the Deliverer's chariot-wheels and forth peals his noble *shankha* and dire strife and revolution. Rabindranath has evidently attained a higher stature. Whitman, from the high pinnacle of poetic genius, views the thronging masses of mankind with a joy that has no parallel in English literature. Rabindranath proceeds further and triumphantly sings halleluiahs to the God of humanity. Rabindranath is the High Priest of humanity.

But I cannot let you go, ladies and gentlemen, without telling you that Tagore had a most hidden spring of joy within himself. I have been few men with such determined power of self-restraint. He held his feelings in complete subjection. He was always cheerful and humorous, as I have already told you, but never emotional. Emotionalism is a thing he utterly hated. But one day a pupil of ours (I suppose it was Sudhi Ranjan Das, now a barrister of repute in this city) told me that he had seen a wonderful thing a few nights before. He had come out for some special purpose when it was 2 o'clock in the morning. Suddenly he saw, to his great astonishment, Rabindranath rapturously dancing and singing his own remarkable song, *Maharaj Aki Saje Aide Hradyapur Majhe*. A mystic drunk with joy, magnifying Nature and Nature's Lord in immaculate moonlight was a sight which, I believe, sincerely believe, the angels in heaven rejoiced to see, as the angels are now verily weeping over the abomination of desolations in Europe.

mind, "with its one side in the dark and the other in the light."

Tagore's major thesis is that Art has its birth "in the element of the superfluous in our heart's relationship with the world." In literature, what overflows our need becomes articulate. The stage of pure utility is not the governing consideration in literature. The presonal man breaks out when he has abundance in his inner life. The second thesis is that in true literature, man expresses his infinite side. To quote Tagore, "Man is true, where he feels his infinity, where he is divine, and the divine is the creator in him." The infinite side of man has to be revealed in symbols which have the elements of immortality. It refuses all that is flimsy and feeble and incongruous. It is in this view of things that Tagore had never been weary of proclaiming that man were the children of light and delight. The function of literature is to build the world of truth and beauty. Tagore believed that "the real is not that which is merely seen and wealth is not that which is stored." The person who is infinite is revealed when there is the joy of living and love of fellow-creatures. The reality lies in the bond of relationship binding our hearts with this world through all time.

When facts are mere facts, they are rejected by the true artist. Tagore accepts the position that "our world of expression does not accurately coincide with the world of facts, because personality surpasses facts on every side. It is conscious of its infinity and creates from its abundance . . . This consciousness of the infinite, in the personal man, ever strives to make its expressions immortal and to make the whole world its own." According to Tagore "the variety of creation is due to the mind seeing different phenomena in different foci of time and space."

Tagore's philosophy of literature cannot be understood if his basic proposition is not accepted that the artist is concerned not with the scientific world (which is our world of reasoning) but with the world of personality (which is our world of emotion and intuition). "The reality of the world belongs to the personality of man not reasoning." In a game the personality of the player counts much. The techniques of the game are changed by different players. Similarly, different artists behave differently, because their personalities differ.

To understand Tagor's world of personality, the fundamental assumption is that it is individual, yet it is universal. The reality

is contained not in the individual personality but in an infinite personality. Our mind is our own; we create our inner world. But it must establish harmony with the universal mind. Two things are to be noted. First, the artist, has its own forms and techniques, but he must try to express more than what they contain. Form is necessary, but the artist must express something which transcends the form. Secondly, the artist as a creator must contribute its own voice to the concert of the world-music. He is to produce harmony, not discord. Hence, the Tagore thesis is this : "Let us express our infinity in everything around us, in works we do, in things we use, in men with whom we deal, in the enjoyment of the world with which we are surrounded. Let our soul permeate our surroundings and create itself in all things, and show its fulness by fulfilling needs of all times".

Life must move on; there must be perpetual giving up. This movement, the consciousness of the infinite in man, the form of perpetual giving out of abundance, all these are the marks of great literature. The eternal in us cannot be expressed if there is not the joy of living. The true joy of life comes when the individual pours himself out in his own creation. A person who does not express does not feel the abundance of joy. The power of expression of his personality is the highest form of existence. Life is to be lived for the expression of our personality through love, through work, through songs, through devotion, through art, or through writings. He who does not express kills his soul. "We must not slay our soul." Isha Upanishad says : "He who sees all things in the soul and the soul in all things is never more hidden".

Tagore's postulate is this. There is the world of nature and the world of humanity. In the natural world, man deals with science. In the moral world, man is concerned with the world of sympathy and understanding. For all other creatures, nature is final. But man wants to move further; he has his own career of creative life. He is not satisfied with the world that is given to him; he is bent upon making its his own. He is restless; he wants to create; he wants to express himself in the creation of his moral world. Man may be foolish, but he does not fully trust the world he lives in. In this view of things, literature is great when it is concerned with the life of soul, with the world of humanity. To quote Tagore, "the whole object of man is to free his personality of self into the personality of soul, to turn his inward forces into

the forward movement towards the infinite, from the concentration of self in desire into the expansion of soul in love".

To understand Tagore's philosophy of literature, certain basic postulate have to be accepted. Man is not satisfied with mere physical existence : he wants to create. He loves to live in fellowship, in understanding, in harmony with the world. And this aspect of man's touch with the world outside is expressed in art and literature. Where man is self-centred, there is no form of expression. Where man is placed on the road of humanity, he needs diverse means of expression. That is why literature talks of man where he worships beauty, truth, welfare, and love. In the field of necessity, man's animal instincts are awake; in the sphere of literature, man is a lover. Literature proclaims the triumph of awakened mind.

The major Tagore thesis is this that literature is concerned not with the world of necessity, but with the world of emotions. According to Tagore, the eternal man is a thinker and a lover. The world of necessity has urged him to make various experiments in physical science, but the world of emotions drove him to create art and literature. There are two forms of expression—through the conquest of nature, and through repense to the world of emotions. Man is to be fully known through the recognition of both forms of expression. But literature knows the essential man, the eternal man, the emotional man. Tagore is not an indifferent to the unity of thoughts and action. Through action, man wants to maintain and preserve his material existence; through thought man wants to reveal himself, to realise his kinship with the world. We cannot afford to be indifferent to the technique of preservation of self, but the task of self-realisation drives man to carve new paths, to make new experiments, to find union in the hearts of people.

There is the world of facts and the world of truth. Facts are scattered, limited. Truths are found when facts are harmonized. Literature looks to the harmony in facts. Facts are diverse, they have different facets; they are studied differently by different persons. But facts are important in literature when they seek to interpret the eternal man and the universal. It is true that the true end of literature is to present life. But much of life is off the point; much of it is unessential and unrelated. Literature, when it deals with the unessential and unrelated facts of life, is not good.

Literature is to eliminate the unessential.

T.S. Elliot emphasised the point that "the great poet, in writing himself, writes his time." It means that every good poet starts from his own emotions. But there is the struggle in the poet "to transmute his personal and private agonies into something rich and strange, something universal and impersonal". It was Tagore's dream that he was the poet of the world whose varied voices and tunes would find response in this flute. According to Tagore, the true end of literature is to interprete the writer's emotions and impulses through language, to make personal joys and pains impersonal, and to invest the spirit of universality with the matters of the moment. There must be profound realisation and deep penetration so that the writer and the reader become united.

It is the Tagore thesis that the eternal man is a thinker; he is less concerned with the world of needs. Literature has to find out and to work for the eternal man, for perfect commerce between the narrow man and the universal mind. This universe with its various colours is raising varied tunes in human heart. Literature has to give expression to those tunes. Hence, in science, life is a conflict, a struggle; in literature, life is a flute to be played upon for truth, beauty and joy.

Man's relations with the universe are established through needs, through intellect and through joy. We are to find the self in all through the bonds of love and delight. Literature wants to take note of the throbbings of man's heart, anxious to meet and love others. There are two fundamental traits of good literature : (1) literature takes note of the various tunes of man's flute; (2) it has to give distinctive form and direction so that an imperishable impression is created on the reader. The true artist has his own angle; he can find out the essential from so-called non-essentials. Moreover, the true artist can give life and flesh to his own creations which impress the reader. This communion between the writer and the reader is to be noted. Man has a cage to live in, the road to travel on. He needs both. The cage without the road creates bounds; the road without the cage brings punishment. The two worlds must meet in the artist. Man must be on the move. Tagore hates those who refuse to move. But roads are not straight. They have their turns and twists. In every turn and twist, new temper, new urge, new tests appear. Every age has its own temper, its own form and style of expression. New forms of

expression and new urges are inevitable. Thus, literature which treats man as an eternal wayfarer has a message for all times. Tagore's literature is instinct with the message for all men of all times.

The Marxist is critical of Tagore's philosophy of literature. With the Marxist, the emphasis is not on the interpretation of the world, but on the methods of changing the course of history. And, ascording to Marx, it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but it is the mode of production in material life that determines the social, political and intellectual life-process general. Thus, the Marxist writer has to be a realist in the sense that he is to work for the victory of the Marxian scheme of reforms. According to Tagore, the purpose of literature is not to express any particular point of view. The writer is not to be the broker of any political party. When man in his agony is dumb, the writer has to give expression to his sufferings. The writer is to deal with man, not with the class. According to the Marxist, the bourgeois art is class art, and the objective should be to achieve classless art. And for the present, the Marxist is satisfied if it is the proletarian art. Tagore believes in class collaboration and class harmony. Hence, he is not accepted the ideal of proletarian literature—literature for the vindication of proletariat dictatorship. The Marxist expects that the writer must fight for revolving of issues on Marxian lines and that he must pronounce favourable judgment on the struggle for proletariat dictatorship.

Truth to say, the personal world in which the good writer lives is being circumscribed by the ascendancy of State power and of machine civilisation. It is a bad day for the writer when the individual loses his soul and is submerged by the State and the machine power. Hence, Tagore had been critical of machine civilisation and totalitarian system which throttled the individual and the diverse means of expression, Marxian realism has a technical sense, and from the point of views. Tagore is not a realist in literature. He does not offer any definite solution, nor does he line up openly on any particular side. He is influenced by the ideals of complete man, the higher purposes of society through human morality.

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TAGORE AND CINEMA

BIBEKANAND RAY

Rabindranath Tagore was about halfway through his life's journey (35 years) when cinematograph was demonstrated by the agents of Lumiere Brothers at Watson Hotel in Bombay on July 7, 1886 with six silent shorts. He was at the zenith of his literary fame in his country and world when the first Bengali silent feature film, *Bilwamangal* was made and released by the Madan Theatres in Calcutta on November 8, 1919. When he died on August 8, 1941, the early Bengali talkie was ten-year-old, and eight of his works have been made into nine feature films in Bengali, one short story, *Man Bhajan* twice.

Even now, 50 years after his death, a film made in Calcutta on his work, even if for the second or the third time, is often a success. The five silent features made on his works—*Man Bhajan* 1923), *Bicharak* (1929 or 1931), *Giribala* (1929), *Dalia* 1930) and *Noukadubi* (1932)—have perished with nearly all other silent Bengali films in the great fire at Tollygunge.

The first sound film on his work, *Natir Puja*, was a filmic version of the song and dance opera of the same name, shot at the poet's ancestral house at Jorasanko in March 1932 with his pupils from Santiniketan taking part and he himself playing a part. In the six decades since, at least 20 more feature films have been made in Bengali on his stories, novels and plays, Probably the two most outstanding of the all, in terms of aesthetic appeal, were made by Satyajit Ray—*Charulata* (1964) and *Ghare Baire* ('The Home and the World', 1984). *Charulata*, based on

the long story, *Nastha Nirh* ('The Broken Nest') has become a cinematic classic; to Ray it is still his aesthetically most satisfying film.

Rabindranath sailed for England from Bombay in mid-May 1920 and traveling for 15 months in Paris, Netherlands, Holland, Belgium, New York, Chicago, Strassburg, Switzerland, Hamburg, Denmark, Stockholm, Berlin, Munich, Durmsturt, Vienna and Prague to raise funds for his expanding school, returning to Santiniketan in July 1921. It is likely that during this long Western tour, he might have seen some films in these European and American cities. German cinema's 'golden era' had just begun and the costume spectacles. *Passion* and *Anne Bolcyn* have been made. Paul Wegner had made *Golem* (1920; Fritz Lang was making *Destiny* (1921), and Robert Wiene had released his famous *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919). In Hollywood, Cecil B. deMille had made *Carmen* and a series of patriotic films, like *Joan the Woman* and the middle-class favourites, *Male* and *Female*, *For Better*, *For Worse*, etc. 'linking fashion with fashionable undress'.

Awakened by this exposure in the West, Rabindranath might have seen some more Bengali films in Calcutta d uring his frequent trips from Santiniketan but even in its heyday, the silent Bengali cinema was, on the whole, an uninspiring experience, Satyajit Ray, reminiscing P.N. Ganguly's *Kalpranaya* (1930) which he saw as a child, remarked, he 'did not see a shred of imagination'. Early themes and stories came from good literature too. Bankim Chandra's stage-success novels slowly gave way to Sarat Chandra's sentimental social stories.

However, if films seen by Rabindranath remain in the realm of conjecture. there is evidence that by 1929 he had formed an opinion about the new medium. Replying to a letter of Murari Kumar Bhaduri, brother of the noted contemporary stage actor, Sisir Bhaduri, in 1929, he wrote : "The important thing in the flow of images. Its visual movement should be so rich as to be able to fulfil itself without the use of words. Where the meaning of one language is constantly pointed out by another, it only shows how infirm the exercise of the first language is. Music fulfils itself in its autonomous flow of notes, without the help of words. Why should not the cinema, with its flow of images ? If this does not happen, it is because of the lack of creativity

and the insensibility of a lazy audience seeking cheap thrills, because it had not earned its right to joy".

The poet had also noticed the invasion of literature in silent Bengali cinema is so far acting as a slave to literature", he added, "because no creative genius has yet arrived to deliver it from its bondage. This act of rescue will not be easy, because in poetry, painting or music, the means are not expensive, whereas in cinema, one needs not only creativity, but financial capital as well".

There is no doubt that this criticism of early cinema was prompted by silent Bengali films, some based on his own stories. By 1929, at least two films had been made on his story—*Man Bhanjan*, the first, of the same title by Naresh Mitra and the second *Giribala* by Madhu Bose. Rabindranath liked the latter but it appears his criticism was provoked by Sisir Bhaduri's *Bicharak* (1929), based on another of his stories, of which the thespian's brother might have asked for his comments.

Shortly after this letter, however, the poet had occasion to see more imaginative film-making abroad. During his visit to Germany in July 1930, he visited the famous UFA studio, and at the entreaty of the proprietor, composed the poem *The Child* in English for a sequence of his songs and recitations shot by the company in the studio. This was his first intoduction to the talkie.

Slowly thus, the poet's resistance to the cinema as an emerging art form might have been overcome and as talkies were being produced in Calcutta after the first, *Jamai Shasthi* by Madan Theatres, released on April 1931, Rabindranath might have been interested in the cinema in the last years of his life. He had taken to his new love, painting, for some years then and during his last European tour in 1930, had taken some of his paintings to hold an exhibition in Paris, organised by his Argentinian admirer, Victoria Ocampo with great pains. He had seen *Passion Play on Christ* while at Munich in July which inspired the poem, *The Child* which he had composed for the UFA.

Returning home in early 1931, he plunged in composing songs, laying aside his new love. Every year, during his birthday in May, he used to take troupes from Santiniketan to sing and dance to his songs in his operas presented in Calcutta. In March 1932, one such opera, *Natir Puja*, presented by a troupe

including the poet himself for several nights on the occasions of his 73rd birthday in his ancestral house at Jorasanko, was filmed by the emerging production company, the New Theatres of B.N. Sircar under the music direction, of Dinendranath Tagore, who did most notations of his songs. The film was release to public acclaim on March 22, 1932.

The same year saw the filming of *Chirakumar Sabha,* also by New Theatres, by Mr. Premankur Atarthi and released on May 28. *Chhokher Bali,* directed by Mr Satu Sen and produced by B.P. Mehra, was released on July 30, 1938. The same day saw the release of *Gora* based on his novel, directed by Naresh Mitra and produced by Devdatta Films. A silent version of *Noukadubi* based on his another popular novel, was also directed by Mitra under the banner of the Madans and released in Cornwalis Cinema in June, 1932. The short story, *Dalia* was made a silent feature by Madhu Bose, the poet's pupil, again produced by Madan Theatres and released in their Crown hall on July 26, the same year.

Ray, who saw the silent version of Bankim Chandra's *Krishnakanter Will,* did not find even one tiny spark of imagination, a genuinely felt moment that would stand out and proclaim the artist.

These then were all the films made on Tagore's stories during his lifetime. Rabindranath wrote a poem on cinema which unlike his letter to Murari Bhaduri in 1929, sang its glory instead. "The uninhibited image was united in marriage with the bodyless word/On the shore of life's flowing river and/in the courtyard of the body's abode". The Bengali poem, *Rupavani,* meaning 'Image and Word' of which the above lines are a short excerpt, is the poet's frank tribute to the new art, which he wrote to mark the inauguration of a cinema-hall of the same name at Hatibagan in north Calcutta on 15th December 1944, more than three years after his death, by his son, Rathindranath Tagore. He had been convinced in these 15 years about the power of the new art, and has coined for it an apt name, *Rupavani,* answering to his concept of cinema as 'a flow of images. . . . not a slave to literature'.

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TAGORE : THE REFORMER AND SEER PAR EXCELLENCE

VERINDER GROVER*

Every thinker is the child of his time and environment. So is the case with Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore was very religious though not in an orthodox sense. The influence of religion on him was from his father who was a devoted student of the *Upanishads* and the *sufi* mystics. From his early life Rabindranath felt the deep bond of kinship with nature and man.

It would not be wrong to say that all aspects of Tagore's life, including thought and action, were dominated by his deep religious conviction. In fact, he emphasised that harmony between nature and man was derived from consciousness of the unity that underlies all beings. Tagore's conception of God was that of a unifying principle in which variety had its place rather than of a featureless unity in which all distinctions were lost.

Tagore was against the regimentation of all types, because it led to suppression of human personality. In the same manner, if a nation is denied the right to self-development it leads to a substantial loss to the whole world.

Tagore abhorred the caste system. In his view, the caste system and its attendant practice of untouchability were the darkest stigmas on Indian society. He thought that such a practice had led Indian society towards a dismal abyss, hence it should be

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abolished as it had prevented the development of the Indian community into a unified and homogeneous whole and was a major cause of misery and humiliation which India had suffered at various times.

Tagore's political ideas were based on his religious and social ideals. Like all democrats, Rabindranath Tagore placed great emphasis on the freedom and dignity of the individual. He was equally conscious of his obligations to society. Tagore envisaged a federative commonwealth of India where men and women, speaking different languages, professing different religions, following different customs and pursuing different avocations, would have complete equality of opportunity and self-expression. Tagore was a liberal and believed that that government is best which governs the least. Tagore's political views were a mixture of the best in the East and the West. He approved the Western idea of democracy but to this he added the Indian conception of the individual's responsibility for social service.

Though Tagore was essentially a poet his interests were not confined to poetry alone. His writings included more than a thousand poems and over two thousand songs, a large number of short stories, novels and dramas. All these are of a very high order. In addition, he made substantial contribution to educational and religious thought, to social reform and politics, to economic reforms and rural reconstruction. In fact, he was the reformer and the seer par excellence.

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The compilers are indebted to Sri Prabodhchandra Sen, Sri Chittaranjan Bandyopadhyaya and Sri Subhendusekhar Mukhopadhyaya for their many helpful suggestions.

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This collected edition of 'poetical works' includes not only verses, songs, and dramas in verse, but some prose-dramas also.

Gadya-Granthavali, 16 vols. (1907-09)

This collected edition of prose writings, consisting of the following 16 volumes, contains mostly essays, although volumes 6 and 7 contain some humorous dramatic sketches; volume 9, two comedies; and volume 5 is a novel : 1. *Vichitra Prabandha* 2. *Prachin Sahitya* 3. *Lokasahitya* 4. *Sahitya* 5. *Adhunik Sahitya* 6. *Hasyakautuk*, 7. *Vyangakautuk* 8. *Prajapatir Nirbandha* 9. *Prahasan* 10. *Raja Praja*

11. *Samuha* 12. *Svades* 13. *Samaj* 14. *Siksha* 15. *Sabdatattva* 16. *Dharma*. These books are better known as separate titles and, with the exception of volume 9, have been listed also in that group.

Rabindra-Rachanavali, 26 vols. (Visva-Bharati, 1939-48)
Contains all works, prose and poetry, published in book form during the author's lifetime, including two volumes of poetry published soon after his death but excluding letters, and songs not occurring in dramas, etc. These 26 volumes in fact constitute the First Series; it was contemplated that some subsequent volumes would contain : (i) songs arranged chronologically; (ii) letters, only a few volumes of which were previously issued in book form, many hundreds of letters having remained unpublished; and (iii) writings not previously published in book form. A considerable amount of material coming under (iii) was included in the appendices of these volumes.

Rabindra-Rachanavali Achalita Sangraha, 2 vols. (Visva-Bharati, 1940-41)
These are companion volumes to *Rabindra-Rachanavali*; they consist chiefly of volumes of early writings later discontinued, and derive the sub-title from this fact. The second volums includes text-books written by Tagore.

Rabindra-Rachanavali (Government of West Bengal, 1961-)
A rearranged edition issued on the occasion of the Tagore Centenary, scheduled to be completed in 13 volumes, of which three volumes have so far been published.

Galpaguchha, 3 parts (Visva-Bharati, latest one volume edition, May 1960) *Short Stories*.
This edition covers the largest number of the author's short stories, but some are yet to be included. *Galpaguchchha* was first published in two parts, in 1900-01, and was followed in 1908-09 by an enlarged edition in five parts.

Gitavitan, 3 parts (Visva-Bharati, latest one volume edition, May 1960) *Songs, Musical Dramas* and *Dance-Dramas*.
This edition includes the largest number of Tagore's songs. Earlier collected editions of songs include *Ganer Bahi o Valmiki Prahibha* (1893) *Gan* (1908; 1909, this edition subsequently in two volumes, *Gan* and *Dharmasangit*.

Ritu-Utsav (1926). '*Season*'-*Dramas* and *song-sequences*
Comprises *Sesh Varshan, Saradotsav, Vasanta, Sundar* and

Phalguni.

Patradhara (1938) *Letters*

Comprises *Chhinnapatra, Bhanusimher Patravali* and *Pathe o Pather Prante.*

Anthologies

Svades (1905). *Patriotic Poems* and *Songs*

Subsequent edition issued under the title *Sankalpa o Svades.*

Chayanika (1909). *Poems* and *Songs*

Samkalan (1925). *Prase writings, other than fiction*

Sanchayita (1931), *Poems, Songs and Verse-dramas*

Selected by the author, and published on the occasion of Tagore Septuagenary celebrations *Sanchayan* (1947) is practically a shorter edition of *Sanchayita.*

Vichitra (Nay 1961).

An anthology, covering practically all aspects of Tagore's literary contribution, published on the occasion of his birth centenary.

English

Separate Work

Gitanjali (Song Offerings). London : The India Society. 1912, *Poems.*

prose translations by the author of a selecton of poems from *Gitanjali, Naivedya Kheya, Gitimalya* etc.

Glimpses of Bengal Life. G. A. Natesan. 1913. *Short Stories.*

Contents : The Fruit-seller (*Kabuliwalla*); The School Closes (*Chhuti*); A Resolve Accomplished (*Panraksha*); The Dumb Girl (*Subha*); The wandering Guest (*Atithi*) ; The Look Auspicious (*Subhadrishti*); A Study in Anatomy (*Kankal*) ; The Landing Stairway (*Ghater Katha*); The Sentence (*Sasti*); The Expiation (*Prayaschitta*) : The Golden Mirage (*Svarna-mriga*) ; The Trespass (*Anadhikar Prabes*); The Hungry Stones (*Kshudhita Pashan*).

Translated by Rajani Ranjan Sen.

The translator's Introduction is dated June 1913.

The Gardener London : Macmillan. (October) 1913. *Poems.*

Prose translations by the author of a selection of poems from *Kshanika, Kalpana, Sonar Tari,* etc.

Sadhana, London : Macmillan. (October) 1913. *Essays and Lectures.*

Contents : The Relation of the Individual to the Universe ; Soul Consciousness ; The Problem of Evil; The Problem of Self ; Realisation in Love ; Realisation in Action ; The Realisation of Beauty; and The Realisation of the Infinite.

"These papers embody . . . ideas which have been culled from several of the Bengali discourses . . .to my students in my school at Bolpur. . .'Realisation in Action' has been translated from my Bengali discourse on 'Karma-yoga' by . . . Surendranath Tagore." Most of these papers were read by the author before the Harvard University.

The Crescent Moon. London : Macmillan. (November) 1913. *Child-Poems*.

Translations by the author of poems mostly from *Sisu*.

Chitra. London : The India Society. 1913. *Drama*.

A translation of *Chitrangada*.

The King of the Dark Chamber. London : Macmillan. 1914 *Drama*.

A translation of *Raja*.

Translated by K. C. Sen.

The translation is erroneously attributed to the author in the title-page.

The Post Office. Churchtown, Dundrum, County Dublin : The Cuala Press, (July) 1914. *Drama*.

A translation of *Dakghar*.

Translated by Devabrata Mukhopadhyaya.

Fruit-Gathering. London : Macmillan. (October) 1916. *Poems*.

Translation of a selections of poems from *Gitimalya*, *Gitah*, *Balaka*, etc.

Fruit-Gathering was issued together with *Gitanjali* under the title *Gitanjali and Fruit-Gathering* by Macmillan (New York) in September 1918, with illustrations by Nandalal Bose, Surendranath Kar, Abanindranath Tagore and Nabendranath Tagore.

Hungry Stones and Other Stories London : Macmillan. 1916.

Contents : The Hungry Stones *Kshudhita Pashan)*; The Victory (*Jay-Parajay*); Once There was a King (*Asambhav Katha*); The Home Coming (*Chhuti*) ; My Lord, the Baby (*Khokababur Pratyabartan*) ; The Kingdom of Cards (*Ekta Ashade*) *Galpa*) ; The Devotee (*Boshtami*) ; Vision (*Drishtidan*) ; The Babus of Nayanjore (*Thakurda*) ; Living or Dead (*fivita o*

Mrita) ; We Crown Thee King (*Rajtika*) ; The Renunciation (*Tyagi*); The Cabuliwallah (*Kabuliwallah*).
Translated by various writers.

Stray Birds. New York : Macmillan. (November) 1916. *Epigrams*

My Reminiscences. London : Macmillan. 1917. *Autobiogaphy.*
A translation of *Jivansmriti.*
(Translated by Surendranath Tagore)

Sacrifice and Other Plays. London : Macmillan. 1917.
Contents : Sanyasi or The Asectic (*Prakritir Pratisodh*) ; Malini (*Malini*) ; Sacrifice (*Visarjan*) ; The King and The Queen (*Raja o Rani*).

The Cycle of Spring, London : Macmillan. 1917. *Drama.*
A translation of *Phalguni.*
The greater part of the introductory portion of this drama was translated by Mr. C. F. Andrews and Prof. Nishikanta Sen and revised by the author.'

Nationalism. London : Macmillan. 1917. *Essays.*
Contents : Nationalism in the West ; Nationalism in Japan ; Nationalism in India.
The series is followed by 'The Sunset of the Century' adapted from some poems of *Naivedya.*

Personality. London : Macmillan. 1917. *Lectures delivered in America.*
Contents : What is Art ; The World of Personality ; My School ; Meditation ; Woman.

Lover's Gift and Crossing. London : Macmillan. 1918. *Pomes and Songs.*
Translations of a selection of poems and songs from *Balaka, Kshanik a, Kheya*, etc.

Mashi and other Stories, London : Macmillan. 1918.
Contents : Mashi (*Sesher Ratri*) ; The Skeleton (*Kankal*) ; The Auspicious Vision (*Subhadrishti*) ; The Supreme Night (*Ek Ratri*) ; Raja and Rani (*Sadar o Andar*); The Trust Property (*Sampatti-Samarpan*); The Riddle Solved (*Samasya-Puran*); The Elder Sister (*Didi*); Subha (*Subha*); The Post-master (*Postmaster*); The River Stairs (*Ghater Katha*); The Castaway (*Apad*); Saved (*Uddhar*); My Fair Neighbour (*Pratibesini*).
Translated by various writers.

The Parrot's Training, Calcutta : Thacker, Spink and Co. 1918. *Allegorical Satire.*

A translation of 'Tota-Kahini', *Lipika*.

Translated by the Author.

A new edition of the book, issued under the title *The Parrot's Training and Other Stories*, (Visva-Bharati, October 1944) includes Trial the of Horse ('Ghoda', *Lipika* : trs. Surendranath Tagore), Old Man's Ghost ('Kartar Bhut', *Lipika* : trs. Amiya Chakravarty), and Great News (Bado Khabar', *Galpasalpa* : trs. Amiya Chakravarty).

The Home and the World, London : Macmillan, 1919, *Novel*.

A translation of *Ghare Baire*.

Translated by Surendranath Tagore.

The Fugitive, Santiniketan : Santiniketan Press, 1919 ? *Poems*.

Translations of a selection of poems from various books.

This is not identical with *The Fugitive* (1921), and was for private circulation.

Greater India, Madras : S. Ganesan. (1921, *Essays*.

Contents : Our Swadeshi Samaj (*Swadeshi Samaj*); The Way to get it done (*Sophalatar Sadupay*); The One Nationalist Party (*Sadhapatir Abhibhashan, Pabna Sammilani*, in part); East and West in Greater India (*Purva o Paschim*).

The Wreck, London : Macmillan, 1921, *Novel*.

A translation of *Naukadubi*.

Glimpses of Bengal, London : Macmillan, 1921, *Novel*.

Translation of a selection from *Chhinnapatra*.

Translated by Surendranath Tagore.

The Fugitive, London : Macmillan, 1921, *Poems* and *Songs*.

Translations of a selection of poems and songs from *Manasi*, *Sonar Tari*, *Gitimalya*, etc., and sketches from *Lipika*.

It also includes translations of the following dramas Kacha and Devayani (*Viday-Abhisap*); and, from *Kahini*, Ama and Vinayaka (*Sati*), The Mother's Prayer (*Gandharir Avedan*), Somaka and Ritvik (*Narakbas*), Karna and Kunti (*Karna-Kunti Samvad*); and translations of a selection of Vaishnava and Baul songs, and Hindi songs of Jnanadas.

Thought Relics, New York : Macmillan, March 1921.

A new and enlarged edition of the book, edited by C.F. Andrews, was published by Macmillan (London) in 1929 under the title *Thought from Tagore*.

Creative Unity, London : Macmillan, 1922, *Essays and Lectures*.

Contents : The Poet's Religion; The Creative Ideal; The

Religion of The Forest; An Indian Folk Religion; East and West; The Modern Age; The Spirit of Freedom; The Nation; Woman and Home; An Eastern University.

Letters from Abroad, Madras : S. Ganesan, 1924, *Letters.*
Letters to C.F. Andrews written during May 1920—July 1921.

Gora, London : Macmillan, 1924, *Novel.*
A translation of *Gora.*
Translated by W.W. Pearson.

The Curse at Farewell, London : G. Harrap, 1924, *Drama.*
A Translation of *Vidya-Abhisap.*
Translated by Edward Thompson.

The Augustan Book of Modern Poetry : Rabindranath Tagore, London : Ernest Benn, 1925.
Translations of 21 poems and 12 epigrams.
Translated by Edward Thompson.

Talks in China, Calcutta, February 1925, *Addresses.*
Contents : Autobiographical; To My Hosts; To Students; To Teachers; Leave Taking; Civilisation and Progress: Satyam.

Red Oleanders, London : Macmillan, 1925, *Drama.*
A translation of *Raktakaravi.*

Broken Ties and Other Stories, London : Macmillan, 1925.
Contents : Broken Ties (*Chaturanga*); In the Night (*Nisithe*); The Fugitive Gold (*Svarnamriga*); The Editor (*Sampadak*); Giribala (*Manbhanjan*); The Lost Jewels (*Manihara*); Emancipation (from *Parisodh*, a poem).

Fireflies, New York : Macmillan, 1928, *Epigrams.*
'Fireflies had their origin in China and Japan where thoughts were very often claimed from me in my handwriting on fans and pieces of silk.'

Letters to a Friend, London : Allen and Unwin, 1928.
Letters to C.F. Andrews.
This volume which consists of letters written during the years 1913-22, is a revised and enlarged edition of *Letters from Abroad* (1924) consisting of letters written during 1920-21.

Fifteen Poems of Rabindranath Tagore, Bombay : K.C. Sen. [1928].
Translations, in verse, of 15 poems from *Balaka.*
Translated by K.C.S. [Kshitischandra Sen]. Por private circulation.

Sheaves, Allahabad : Indian Press, 1929, *Poems of Songs.*
Poems and Songs selected and translated by Nagendranath Gupta.
The Child, London : George Allen and Unwin, 1931, *Poem.*
The Bengali version of this poem is 'Sisutirtha', *Punascha*, the English version being earlier.
The Religion of Man, London : George Allen and Unwin, 1931, *Lectures.*
'The chapters included in this book, which comprises the Hibbert Lectures, delivered in Oxford, at Manchester College, during the month of May 1930, contain also the gleanings of my thoughts on the same subject from the harvest of many lectures and addresses delivered in different countries of the world over a considerable period of my life.'
The Appendices include, among other things, 'Note on the Nature of Reality', being a conversation between Tagore and Einstein on July 14, 1930, and 'An Address in the Chapel of Manchester College, Oxford, on May 25, 1930, by Rabindranath Tagore'.
The Golden Boat, London : Allen and Unwin, 1932.
Contains translations principally of prices from *Lipika*, and of a selection of poems.
Translated by Bhabani Bhattacharya.
Mahatmaji and the Depressed Humanity, Calcutta : Visva-Bharati December 1932, *Addresses.*
Addresses, statements, etc. on the occassion of Mahatma Gandhi's epic fast' in September 1932. The book includes Bengali versions of some of the addresses.
Man, Waltair : Andhra University, 1937.
Lectures delivered at the Andhra University.
My Boyhood Days, Santiniketan : Visva-Bharati, [December 1940], *Autobiography.*
A translation of *Chhelebela.*
Translated by Marjorie Sykes.
Crisis in Civilization, Santiniketan : Visva-Bharati, [May 1941, *Address.*
A Message on completing his eighty years.

Published after the Death of the Author

Poems, Calcutta : Visva-Bharati, February, 1942.
Translations are by the author, with the exception of the last

nine poems, translated by Amiya Chakravarty. The poems cover all major divisions in the poet's writings, 1886-1941. In the Notes appended to the book, the title (or the first line) of the original Bengali composition and the book in which it first appeared, are given. Wherever possible the year of the original composition has been indicated, failing which the year of the publication of the book in which it first appeared. Edited by Krishna Kripalani in collaboration with Amiya Chakravarty, Nirmalchandra Chattopadhyaya and Pulinbihari Sen.

Two Sisters, Calcutta : Visva-Bharati, December, 1945, *Nobel.*
A translation of *Dui Bon.*
Translated by Krishna Kripalani.

Farewell, My Friend, London : The New India Publishing Company, [1949], *Novel.*
A translation of *Sesher Kavita.*
Translated by Krishna Kripalani.
A new edition of the book (*Farewell, my Friend and the Garden*, Bombay : Jaico, August 1956) includes a translation, by Krishma Kripalani, of *Malancha.*

Three Plays, Bombay : Oxford University Press, 1950.
Comprises translation of *Mukta-Dhara*, *Natir Puja* and *Chandalika.*
Translated by Marjorie Sykes.

Four Chapters, Calcutta : Visva-Bharati, September 1950, *Novel.*
A translation of *Char Adhyay.*
Translated by Surendranath Tagore.

A Tagore Testament, London : Meridian Books, 1953, *Autobiographical Essays.*
Translations of essays included in *Atmaparichay*, together with some poems selected by the translator to introduce the essays.
Translated by Indu Dutt.

A Flight or Swans, London : John Murray, 1955, *Poems.*
Translations of poems from *Balaka* and the poem '*Matri-Abhishek*' ('He Mor Chitra'), *Gitanjali.*
Translated by Aurobindo Bose.

Syamali, Calcutta : Visva-Bharati, September 1955, *Poems.*
A translation of *Syamali.*
Translations are by Sheila Chatterjee, with the exception of 'The Eternal March', translated by the author.

The Herald of Spring, London : John Murray, 1957.

Translations of poems from *Mahua*.
Translated by Aurobindo Bose.

Our Universe, London : Meridian Books, 1958, *A Science Primer*.
A translation of *Visva-Parichaya*, with some poems included by the translator to introduce the chapters.
Translated by Indu Dutt.

Binodini, New Delhi : Sahitya Akademi, March 1959, *Novel*.
A translation of *Chokher Bali*.
Translated by Krishna Kripalani.

The Runaway and Other Stories, Calcutta : Visva-Bharati, May 1959.
Contents : The Runaway (*Atithi*); (The Hidden Treasure (*Guptadhan*): Cloud and Sun (*Megh-o-Raudra*); False Hopes (*Durasa*); The Judge (*Vicharak*); Mahamaya (*Mahamaya*); Trespass (*Anadhikar) Prabes*); The Conclusion (*Samapti*); The Stolen Treasure (*Charai Dhan*).
Translated by various writers.

Wings of Death, London : John Murray, 1960, *Poems*.
Translations of poems from *Prantik*, *Rogasaiyay*, *Arogya* and *Sesh Lekha*.
Translated by Aurobindo Bose.

Poems from Puravi, Santiniketan : Uma Roy, 8 May 1960.
Six poems from *Puravi* and a poem from *Sesh Lekha*.
Translated by Kshitis Roy, For private circulation.

Letters from Russia, Calcutta : Visva-Bharati, September 1960.
A translation of *Russiar Chithi*.
Translated by Sasadhar Sinha.
An account of Tagore in Russia, based on notes kept by Amiya Chakravarty and other members of the poet's party, is printed in the appendix.

Natir Puja (The Court Danger), Calcutta : Writers Workshop, 1961, *Drama*.
A translation of *Natir Puja*.
Translated by Shyamasree Devi, For private circulation.

A Visit to Japan, New York : East West Institute, May 1961, *Travel*.
A translation of *Japan-Yatri*, published 'in commemoration of Tagore Centenary'.
Translated bo Shakuntala Rao Sastri.

Devouring Love, New York : East West Institute, May 1961, *Drama.*
A translation of *Raja-o-Rani,* published 'in commemoration of Tagore Centenary'.
Translated by Shakuntla Rao Sastri.

Anthologies and Collected Works

Stories from Tagore, Calcutta : Macmillan, 1918 ?
Contents : The Cabuliwallah; The Home-Coming; Once there was a King; The Child's Return (My Lord, the Baby); and The Babus of Nayanjore, from *Hungry Stones and Other Stories.*
Subha; The Postmaster; and The Castaway, from *Mashi and and Other Stories.*
Master Mashai (*Master Masay*) and The Son of Rashmani (*Rasmanir Chhele*). first published in this book.
The selection is intended for use in Schools.

Poems from Tagore Calcutta : Macmillan 1922 ?
An anthology of poems and songs compiled from the following :
Gitanjali; *The Gardener*; *The Crescent Moon*; *Fruit-Gathering*; songs from *The Cycle of Spring*; *Stray Birds*; *Lover's Gift*; *Crossing*; and *The Fugitive*,
With an introduction by C. F. Andrews.
The selection is intended primarily for use in Schools and Colleges in India.

Lectures and Addresses by Rabindranath Tagore, London : Macmillan, 1928.
Selected from the speeches of the Poet by Anthony X, Soares.
Contents : My Life, from *Talks in China*; My School, from *Personality*; Civilization and Progress, from *Talks in China*; Construction *versus* Creation, an address delivered at the Gujerati Literary Conference, Ahmedabad 1920; What is Art ?, from *Personality*; Nationalism in India, from *Nationalism*; International Relations, a lecture delivered in Japan (1924); The Voice of Humanity, an address given at Milan (1925); and The Realization of the Infinite, from *Sadhana.*

The Tagore Birthday Book, London Macmillan, 1928.
Selected from the English Works of Rabindranath Tagore,

Edited by C.F. Andrews.

Collected Poems and Plays or Rabindranath Tagore, London : Macmillan 1930.

Contents : *Gitanjali, The Crescent Moon, The Gardener, The Post Office, Lover's Gift, Crossing, Stray Birds, The Cycle of Spring, The Fugitive and other Poems: Sacrifice and Other Plays*; and *Karna and Kunti* from *The Fugitive.*

While some of the books have not been reprinted in full, the 'other poems' added to *The Fugitive* include the following poems not published before in any other book : This Evil Day; Boro-Budur; Fulfilment; The Son of Man; Raidas, the Sweeper; Freedom; The New Year; Krishnakali; W. W. Pearson; and Santiniketan Song.

A Tagore Reader, New York : Macmillan, [April] 1961.

An anthology, edited by Amiya Chakravarty, published in observance of the Centennial of Tagore's birthday. The selections appear under the following headings : Travel, Letters, Short stories, Autobiographical Writings, Conversations, Fables, Drama. On India, On Education, Art and Literary Criticism, Philosophical Meditations and Poetry, and include some new translations by the editor, whose introductory prefeces to each section include relevant information concerning the context in which the original material was written, brief discussions of the contents of the section, and facts concerning translations and publication.

Towards Universal Man, Bombay : Asia Publishing House, 7 May 1961, *Essays.*

A selection of essays on social, economic, political and educational topics to indicate Tagore's contributions in those fields, prepared by the Tagore Commemorative Volume Society, New Delhi, on the occasion of the Centenary of Tagore's birth.

Contents : The Vicissitudes of Education (*Sihsar Herpher*); Society and State (*Swadeshi Samaj*); The Problem of Education (*Siksha-Samasya*) What Then ? (*Tatah Kim*); Presidential Address [at Pabna] (*Sobhapatir Abhibhashan*): East and West (*Purva-o-Paschim*); Hindu University (*Hindu Visvavidalaya*); On the Eve of Departure (*Yatrar Purvapatra*); The Master's Will be Done (*Kartar Ichchhay Karma*); The Centre of Indian

Culture; The Unity of Education (*Sikshar Milan*); The Call of Truth (*Satyer Ahwan*); The Striving for Swaraj (*Swaraj Sadhan*); A Poet's School; City and Village (Partly, ***Palli-Prakriti***)! Co-operation (Samavaya I and *Samavayaniti*); The Changing Age (*Kalantar*) and Crisis in Civilization (*Sabhyatar Samkat*).

With an Introdution by Professor Humayun Kabir, and Notes by Kshitis Roy on the essays, indicating the Bengali originals, the dates of their first publication and occasions of some of the addresses.

Joint Publications

The Visvabharati, Rabindranath and [C. F.] Andrews, Madras : Natesan, April 1923, *Essays*.

Tagore contributed :

The Visva-Bharati Ideal, pp. 1-26.

East and West, Gilbert Murray and Rabindranath Tagore, Paris : International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, League of Nations, 1935.

Two open letters exchanged between Gilbert Murray and Rabindranath Tagore.

Rabindranath Tagore, Pioneer in Education, London, John Murray, 1961, *Essays and Exchanges* between Rabindranath Tagore and L. K. Elmhirst.

The following writings and discourses of Rabindranath Tagore and included in this book : A Poet's School; The Philosophical Approach to Sriniketan; The Parrot's Training; and The Art of Movement in Education.

Letters from Tagore appear on pp. 17, 23, 27-30, 33-34, 36-38, 43.

Tagore's Conversations are reported in Mr. Elmhirst's Preface and his essay 'The Foundation of Sriniketan.'

II. BOOKS AND ARTICLES ON TAGORE

1. Mr. Rhys' Rabindra Nath Tagore : A Biography. (Published by Messrs. Macmillan and Co., 5 s. net.)
2. R.C. Dutt's "Literature of Bengal."
3. My Monograph on Tagore.
(Biographies of Eminent Indians Series, published by Messrs. Natesan and Co., Madras. As. 4).

4. Mr. J.D. Anderson's Article on the metre of Tagore's *Gitanjali*. (The *New Reformer*, October 1914).
5. The chapter dealing with Tagore in Vol. III of Indian Nation-Builders Series, (published by Messrs. Ganesh and Co.).
6. The article by the Rev. C.F. Andrews on Tagore. (*Modern Review* for July 1913).
7. The Rev. Mr. C.F. Andrews' *The Renaissance in India.*
8. The Rev. Mr. C.F. Andrews' *An Evening with Rabindra.* (*Modern Review*, August 1912).
9. Lord Hardinge's Presidential Remarks on the occasion of the lecture on Tagore by the Rev. C.F. Andrews, (pp. 34-35 of the *Modern Review* for July 1913).
10. The Rev. C.F. Andrews' Poem *On Reading the Gitanjali*, (published in the *Modern Review* and in his collected poems).
11. The Rev. Mr. C.F. Andrews' Poem on Tagore, (*Modern Review*, March 1912).
12. Mr. J. Ramsay Macdonald's Article to the *Daily Chronicle* about the school at Bolpur.
13. Article on *The Gitanjali* by the Rev. P.B. Emmet in *The Indian Review* for May 1913.
14. Article on *Modern Bengali Fiction* by Mr. K.C. Chatterji. (*The Indian Review*, July 1914).
15. A Review of Tagore's *Gora* by Satya V. Mukerjea. (*Modern Review*, August 1912).
16. Mrs. Norah Richards' article on *European* Influence on the Indian Stage (*Modern Review*, January 1914).
17. Article on "Patriotic Songs of Bengal" by Hemendra Prasad Ghose in the *Indian Review* for September 1907.
18. The chapter on "Sadhana" in Pandit Sita Nath Tattwabhushan's *History of Brahmoism.*
19. John Alden Carpenter's Book of Songs setting to music selections from *Gitanjali*, (published by Mr. G. Schirmer).
20. Four Songs from *Gitanjali* set to music by Professor London Ronald. (Messrs. Macmillan and Co.).
21. The portion in the Bengal Adminitration Report dealing with Tagore as a landlord.
22. Mr. Ajitkumar Chakravarthi's article on "Shantiniketan." (*Modern Review*, 1913).

23. Mr. Seshadri's Articles in *The Hindu* for 1914-15 on *The Crescent Moon*, *The King of the Dark Chamber*, and *The Post Office*.
24. J.C. Rollo's *Chitra* : [*Indian Review* for 1914, pp. 609, 610].
25. Professor T. Hirose of Keio University, Tokio on Tagore. [Journal of the Indo-Japanese Association for August 1915, quoted in the *Modern Review*, January 1916].
26. Tagore's Limitations. [From the Vernacular paper *Hindustan* quoted in the *Indian Review*, November 1915, page 977].
27. Sir Narayan Chandavarkar's Lectures on Tagore in 1915.

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